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# THE STORY OF CECILIA



by  
Katharine Tynan Hinkson

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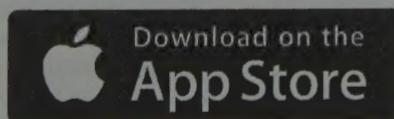
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She felt strangely lonely, with a girl's wistful loneliness.

—Page 184

# THE STORY OF CECILIA

BY

KATHARINE TYNAN HINKSON

AUTHOR OF "A DAUGHTER OF KINGS," "HER FATHER'S  
DAUGHTER," ETC., ETC.

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# THE STORY OF CECILIA

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## CHAPTER I

### OLD, UNHAPPY, FAR-OFF THINGS

THE story of Cecilia Grace's parentage was a curious one.

Maurice Grace, a plodding, serious young doctor, with no pretension to good looks except his deep and quiet eyes, born of little more than peasant stock, had found himself at the age of twenty-eight or thereabouts doing *locum tenens* for Dr. Brady, of Knocklynn.

Knocklynn is situated in "a great wild country." The villages are small and scattered, the farmers poor and struggling. There is no middle-class there, unless the village shopkeepers count for such. There could be no lonelier spot for a young man cast away there as was Maurice Grace. Hardly any society came his way. The priest, a traveling school-inspector or official of the Department of Agriculture or the Post Office: these made about the only society available. There were a few

great houses in the neighborhood. But these houses—Arlo, empty now because of a recent tragedy, Kilrush House, where the master was but a child, the House of Dromore—were nearly as much above Maurice Grace as the sky over him.

Nevertheless, a cat may look at a king. The one distraction amid the young doctor's loneliness—and he felt his loneliness less than other men, being somewhat solitary by nature and quite ready to be absorbed by his books—was a certain exquisite face that had first swum into his ken when he knelt at Mass in the little church at Knocklynn, the face of Miss Cecily Shannon, the young, orphaned cousin of Lord Dromore, the great personage of the neighborhood.

Some people might have thought Lady Dromore better worth looking at. Lady Dromore belonged to a family of English aristocrats which had remained faithful to the old Church during all the storms of the spacious days and the succeeding centuries. At first Lady Dromore's charm did not or might not dawn on one. She was not really tall, but she gave the impression of height. Her slenderness had a drooping air. Amid her exquisite, little, dancing children she had the look of a flower blown by the wind. Father Tracy, who was imaginative out of the common, had

remarked to Maurice Grace that Lady Dromore was an exotic. She was the product of ages of refinement, an exquisite thing. "Yet," said the priest, "'twould be the saving of families like the Aubreys—you know Lady Dromore was Lord Aubrey's daughter—if they would intermarry with peasants once in a while. There is too much selection about the Aubreys."

Maurice Grace had barely noticed Lady Dromore, further than thinking that she and her pretty children were good to look upon together; the earl, a tall, thin man with high, aristocratic features and a dome-like head sparsely covered with sandy hair, seemed to him incongruous with such beauties; but his eyes were for Cecily Shannon.

Miss Shannon had the head of a young angel. If Maurice Grace had known anything at that time of Browning—his reading up to then had been chiefly of medical books—he must have remembered—

"If one could have that little head of hers  
Painted upon a background of pale gold."

She was such a wonder of rose and gold and white—such a flower-like creature, with the faint sweetness hardly to be called a smile hovering about her soft, pale lips, that it was no wonder Maurice Grace had no eyes for any

beauty but hers, no wonder that while he studied his books, full of painful details of mortality, the face which seemed to lift its possessor into immortality would suddenly come between him and the page like apple-blossoms, like wild roses in June.

The desire of the moth for the star. Well, Maurice Grace was too humble a moth ever to lift his desire towards his starry lady: he was satisfied to sit and look at her from afar: to let the thought of her fill his mind to the exclusion of mundane things, so that any sudden call upon him brought him out of his dreams with a start. When, suddenly—the star fell into his bosom.

One night while he sat reading alone, hardly heeding the storm outside, except when now and again a flash brought into sudden prominence the distant towers and battlements of the House of Dromore, some one came to his window as a stray bird might, attracted by the light. He had barely time to reach her side, to receive her into his arms, when Cecily Shannon, for it was she, dropped in a faint.

He carried her into the house, procured blankets and rugs, and laid her on the sofa in his sitting-room. In his search for these things he discovered the absence of Mary Anne Slattery, the housekeeper, who, not for the first time, was enjoying a night out in the village,

feeling sure that the absent-minded young doctor would never discover her absence.

He was at his wits' end what to do. Finally he commended the unconscious girl to the angels who could not be far off from Cecily Shannon, and rushed headlong through the drenched country to the House of Dromore, which was at no great distance as the crow flies. He fortunately found Lord Dromore still up and waiting in his library, and succeeded in attracting his attention without wakening the household.

Lord and Lady Dromore followed him back to the doctor's house with all speed possible. They were beside him when at last Cecily Shannon opened her eyes, with little surprise apparently at finding herself amid such unfamiliar surroundings.

The next day Dr. Grace was called in to Miss Shannon, who in her delirium over-night had contracted a bad chill, and was lying seriously ill with an illness which soon revealed itself as pneumonia.

It was a very bad case, but the doctor and the nurse he had called down from Dublin, a freckled, angular girl, who, when he was not looking at her, would turn eyes of devotion on the silent young man, fought death, hand to hand, for the young life. At last their efforts were rewarded. Slowly, slowly, Cecily Shan-

non drew away a little every day from the gates of the great mystery that had been opening to receive her; every day turned a little more to the things of life.

As her convalescence made progress her dependence on the doctor became very obvious. It was borne in upon Lady Dromore with a shock that she longed for his presence, fretted when he was not there, seemed absorbed indeed in the thought of him to the exclusion of the others who were admitted to the sick room. She was exacting as a convalescent child. No one could do things for her like the doctor. Other people hurt her when they moved her: she was petulant with her nurse, she who had always been so gentle: even Lady Dromore could not do things for her as she wished.

Maurice Grace wore himself out to respond to her exactions. He was at her beck and call every hour of the day, almost of the night. Between his work as *locum tenens* and his attendance on Miss Shannon his hours for rest and food were sadly curtailed.

When at last her recovery was assured, although the haggard anxiety had passed from his face, it had left its traces.

Lady Dromore spoke of it to her husband.

“Dr. Grace thinks we may dispense with Sister Mary this week,” she said. “There is nothing now that home-nursing cannot do.

Next week, if the weather holds up, he thinks we can get her out in the sunniest hours of the day. And—Dr. Brady comes back on Friday. Dr. Grace's devotion has been beyond praise."

Something in her voice made her husband turn and look at her.

"What is the matter, Edith?" he asked. "What do you mean about Dr. Grace? He seems a very good fellow."

"Why should anything be the matter?"

"My dear, do you think I do not know by this time what the droop of your voice means. Ciss is doing all right, hey?"

There was a kind ring of anxiety in Lord Dromore's voice. He was very fond of his portionless young cousin, whom a more worldly man might have thought something of a burden, for the Dromores were not rich, and Cecily Shannon had given them special cause for anxiety.

"Ciss is making excellent progress. Only I don't know how she will take the doctor's going."

"We'd better keep him on, make it worth his while, till poor Ciss is on her feet again. I should like to do something for that young man. He has behaved uncommonly well all through. Don't you think so, Edith?"

"I have watched him at Ciss's bedside, when there was practically no hope," Lady Dromore

said, in her soft, trailing voice. "Under God he saved Ciss's life."

"What can we do for him, Edith?"

Lady Dromore went and stood by the window, her long dress of dull blue silken stuff following her, and settling itself when she stood still.

"I don't know how Ciss will take his going," she said again.

Lord Dromore stared at her in surprise.

"Why do you harp on it, Edith? Ciss will miss him at first, but she has us all. The sooner she gets rid of sick-room associations the better."

"Ah, yes, I dare say you are right," Lady Dromore said; but her husband could see that she was perplexed by the pucker between her brows and the manner in which she stood clasping and unclasping her delicate, jeweled hands.

He knew more about her thoughts when, a few days later, Dr. Grace's visits suddenly ceased. Lady Dromore had thought it better there should be no leave-taking, and Dr. Grace had agreed with her. She was a very proud woman in her gentle way, but simple and tender-hearted as well, and the spasm which crossed the young doctor's plain dark face when she suggested to him that the visit he had just paid Miss Shannon should be the last, touched her to sharp compassion.

“As you will, Lady Dromore,” he said quietly.

“I’m afraid she will miss you dreadfully,” she said, against her better judgment.

Again his face twitched; but Lady Dromore was fain to own that he had dignity.

“Miss Shannon has been a very grateful patient,” he said. “I am rewarded by having been of use to her.”

Only when he had gone did Lady Dromore remember the very substantial check which she ought to have handed to Dr. Grace. He was gone from the House of Dromore apparently without thinking of his fee: gone back to his work in Dublin. When the check followed him he returned it. He had done nothing to earn such an excessive fee. If Lord Dromore would give him the ordinary medical fees he would be quite satisfied.

His lordship said something that sounded like a strong word, and then broke into plaudits of the doctor. It was quixotic, idiotic, ridiculous, but it was fine. He praised Heaven for the unbusiness-like race of Irish doctors. But Grace would have to take the fee. Confound him, what did he mean by it? He had saved pretty Ciss’s life, and in one way or another he would have to take his fee.

Meanwhile Sister Mary had not returned to Dublin. Within a very few days it became

evident that she was not likely to return to Dublin for some time, for Ciss's case did not look at all so favorable as it had done a week ago. There had been a sudden check to Ciss's convalescence with the disappearance of Dr. Grace. She had not very much strength to lose: and she seemed to have lost the will to get well.

It ended in Dr. Grace's having to be recalled; and now the sick girl could hardly bear him out of her sight. He was shocked at the ground she had lost. He was ready to wait on her hand and foot. And Ciss was as exacting as a convalescent child. No one could lift her on to her sofa: no one carry her downstairs except the doctor. If he was not there to do things for her, she would not let any one else take his place.

At last even Lord Dromore, most unobservant of men, noticed Ciss's infatuation for her doctor.

“Confound it!” he said; “it seems as though Grace had put Paul Chadwick out of her mind. Hyperion and a Satyr! Can it be possible?”

Lady Dromore winced as though he had hurt her.

“Do you know, I believe she confuses him with poor Paul?” she said. “And—haven't you noticed it?—there is a queer likeness. To be sure Dr. Grace has no looks to speak of, and

Paul was as handsome as a man dare to be. Do you not see the likeness?"

Lord Dromore did not see it, and went off grumbling that he supposed they must start a body-physician at the House of Dromore to please Ciss.

A few days later Maurice Grace stood before Lady Dromore, proud and yet humble.

"I have no doubt," he said, "that your ladyship will order me from your door; but I must speak all the same. Miss Shannon loves me. I should not have dared to aspire to her, but—she loves me. And since she loves me, I must endure your ladyship's anger and . . . and contempt."

His eyes met hers as proudly as her own, though his words were humble.

"Oh, not contempt!" answered Lady Dromore, in a shocked voice. "Not contempt. And you have saved her life, the poor child. Only"—her voice was softly compassionate—"my poor boy"—Maurice Grace could hardly believe his ears that Lady Dromore was calling him her poor boy—"I'm afraid that Ciss . . . confuses you with some one else. Her lover . . . Sir Paul Chadwick met a frightful death at the hands of savages. She heard of it with the most cruel suddenness. The shock has . . . we hope only for the time . . . just clouded her poor brain. It will pass, Dr.

Grace. Then . . . Ciss will . . . will . . . be herself once more."

Maurice Grace winced and bowed his head in a way Lady Dromore found curiously touching.

"You mean she will see me as I am?" he said simply. "Well, the other man is dead. I will risk it, Lady Dromore. Give her to me. Honestly, I believe she will not live if I leave her now. She requires a doctor's constant supervision. She will be happy with me. In the happiness I shall give her the cloud will lift from her brain."

To her amazement Lady Dromore found herself discussing what would have seemed an impossible proposition.

"Have you considered," she asked, "what the lifting of the cloud may mean to you?"

"I have considered it," he said, "and I accept it. Give her to me, Lady Dromore."

"Is there no other way?" Lady Dromore asked piteously. "If you were a married physician—I had been hoping . . . Sister Mary is a charming creature. . . . We feel that she ought to be under . . . supervision. She has wandered more than once, poor child. I could not bear the thought of Ciss . . . in one of those . . . places. Dromore says they are asylums under another name. And the

specialist . . . who saw Ciss said the cloud would pass."

"There is only one way," Maurice Grace repeated with quiet passion. "What have I to offer another woman?"

Some one had called Lady Dromore the proudest woman in Ireland. Lord Dromore's pride by hers was a very simple thing. Yet it was she who laid before Lord Dromore the peasant-born doctor's amazing proposal; it was she who met Lord Dromore's gust of indignation with the gentle reminder that Ciss's life, her ultimate reason, depended on her happiness.

"I have been broken-hearted at the thought of sending poor Ciss away from us," she said. "And I fear the poor child would die of it."

"What does a man want with a mad wife?" Lord Dromore spluttered, altering the line of attack. "A doctor, too! He doesn't want a taint in his children."

"There will be no taint, and he knows it. With happiness Ciss will become what she was once. He was very explicit about it. He has no doubt at all that with happiness Ciss's dreams and delusions will pass."

"Then she will turn from him, seeing him for what he is."

"I do not think so," Lady Dromore said with

conviction. "Any woman would be a poor thing who could turn from such devotion."

"I am amazed at you, Edith," was all her husband could say.

The strange marriage took place at Knocklynn Church one golden autumn morning; and Maurice Grace carried off his bride for the lengthened Italian honeymoon the generosity of the Dromores made possible, which was to be the first stage of Ciss's perfect recovery, mentally and bodily.

The marriage was barely done and the bridal pair departed when there came a thunderbolt out of the clearing sky. Paul Chadwick was not dead; he had been a prisoner in the hands of the cannibal tribe by which he had been reported killed and eaten.

When the news came Lord and Lady Dromore looked at each other in pale consternation. How were they to meet Paul Chadwick and tell him he had lost his bride? He adored Ciss. It was to have been his last adventure before his marriage. How were they to welcome him back from the dead, and tell him that his bride had been snatched from him by something crueler than death?

While they asked themselves and each other these questions, through the days and weeks that intervened before Sir Paul Chadwick's

return, Ciss, on her Italian pilgrimage, was every day gathering her lost roses, every day becoming more a delicate and radiant shape of joy.

Strangers encountering the oddly assorted pair saw nothing more remarkable about that beautiful Mrs. Grace than something that might pass for absent-mindedness. But then she was so absorbed in her plain-looking husband that it might well be she had no thoughts to spare for others in his absence. They troubled little about newspapers. There was a strange absence of letters from home. The news the Dromores had to give would wait the telling.

So it was that not until the wonderful honeymoon was over and the bridal pair back in their Dublin house did Maurice Grace learn that the dead had returned, the dead come back, it might be, to push him from his stool.



## CHAPTER II

### TWILIGHT

LADY DROMORE would have been the last person in the world to have shut out Ciss from the House of Dromore because she had married beneath her; because her husband was not conventionally a gentleman; because he committed such solecisms as taking the water in his finger-bowl to be for the purpose of washing his fruit, as he had done on one occasion, expressing a simple appreciation of the sanitary aspect of the measure. She had not moved a muscle then as she imitated the action, to the horror of the servants; and she had felt that if any one else were to reveal his blunders to him she could not have forgiven the busybody.

What did it matter, she thought with a fine scorn, supposing the mind and the will and the heart were gentle, while she sipped her tea from a saucer on an occasion when Maurice Grace had done the like, thanking Heaven as she did so that the frank critics of the nursery were not present.

Still, with Paul Chadwick settled down at the gates of the House of Dromore, and settled

there as though he, the wanderer, who in his thirty years has seen many wild lands and known many wild peoples, had had enough of wandering, it was a different matter.

That imprisonment, with no possible end, as it seemed, except to be killed at any hour and cooked and eaten the next, had had no great effect on him. He had been in more tight corners than any man of his age in Europe, and he had never been afraid of tight corners, or hopeless as to his ability to wriggle out of them in time. But the news that awaited his return at Southampton, where Lord and Lady Dromore were waiting for him as his vessel ground along the pier, with faces which in themselves carried bad news, made the most profound impression upon his hitherto gay and careless nature. He had promised Ciss that it would be his last journey into the waste places of the earth; the allurement of an adventure had drawn him away from her, the sweetest and loveliest bride man ever won, as he said in his grief. He had chosen "the bright face of danger," and he had lost his other sweet mistress, had lost her in a sadder way than by death.

At first in the shock of the ill-tidings he had been desperate. He had said that he would recover Ciss from the man who had won her because of her affliction, the affliction which he

had wrought; that he had the best right to her; that his love would win her back to reason; but even in the throes of his passion and despair he knew the wildness of what he was saying. He reproached Lord and Lady Dromore bitterly with what he called the sacrifice of his angel, and was so unreasonable that Lord Dromore resented it, while Lady Dromore bore with him with an exquisite sweetness and patience that presently charmed away his madness.

He shut himself up for a time at Arlo, his great old house, which, standing on a high hill-side, dominated the country-side. A solitary man in the great rambling old house—there were fifty bedrooms at Arlo—with a dozen servants nominally to attend to his solitary wants, his was a case that weighed heavily on Lady Dromore's compassionate heart, and on other hearts as well. She often wished he would go back to his old life of wandering and adventure; but that in his grief seemed to him as a thing which had cost him so dear that for him henceforth renunciation was the one thing possible, the one and only atonement.

For one solitary winter he never even hunted. He might be met with riding by lonely and little-frequented roads; or you might see him from a distance standing by himself contemplating some work his men were doing; for Arlo was one of those great over-

grown barracks, which, crumbling in many parts, required to be patched and repaired constantly if it were not to be given over to ruin and the rats.

It was the salvation of him that in the second winter after his return he took to farming, with an energy that showed that the old spirit was there and must find vent somehow. He was to be met with in fairs and markets; his sheep were on the hill-side, and his cattle on the old pastures about Arlo which had not been broken within the memory of men. Presently the plowmen with their teams were out on his uplands; and now he might be met with riding about his own business or his tenants', for, greatly to the delight of the tenantry, his recovered energy found another vent in looking after his business instead of leaving it to an attorney who was far from being *persona grata* with the people.

When these things came about the Dromores breathed more freely. Lord Dromore walked into his wife's drawing-room one afternoon, jubilant for him, Sir Paul Chadwick following him.

Nothing was said between him and Lady Dromore. His eyes that drooped shyly before hers, looking at him with the expression they had worn for her little Betty on that occasion when Father Tracy's prejudices against the

Aubreys had come tumbling down in a heap, said all that need be said between them.

He stayed to tea and afterwards to dinner at the House of Dromore. Between tea and dinner he was carried up to the nursery; no longer the nursery now, but the schoolroom, where Dermot, the eldest boy, was poring over his declensions, and Sheila and Oona and Betty and Brian, and even little Guy had grown out of all knowledge.

Betty looked shyly at him, had forgotten him. The little girls in their quaint smocks grouped about their lovely mother seemed to him beautiful, like a cluster of little roses about a greater one, so that his heart was soft. So might Ciss have looked with his children. He knew somehow that Ciss was the mother of a child, the child of the low-born fellow who had stolen his jewel from him.

The traces of suffering on his handsome face but made it the handsomer. The slight haggardness, the depth of the eyes that had known grief, did his comely young manhood no wrong. Lady Dromore liked him better than she had ever liked him in his old, happy days. And after that renewal of the old ties between him and the House of Dromore he was no longer solitary. He came again and again, and was often to be found in the schoolroom, where the children adored him and he made a special pet

of Betty, who was brown and comely and always dancing about like a little brown moth. Betty was quite unlike the other fair children.

The intimacy settled the matter of Ciss and her husband being received at the House of Dromore, settled it for Lady Dromore, for whom nothing else would have settled it.

And indeed there seemed no reason to trouble about Ciss, who seemed perfectly happy with her husband and baby when Lady Dromore made a pilgrimage to Dublin for the express purpose of seeing her, as she did two or three times a year.

Maurice Grace seemed likely to succeed in his profession. Perhaps his devotion, his painstakingness, made amends for lack of brilliancy, and for an outward appearance which some people said forbade any idea of his ever becoming a fashionable doctor. The three thousand pounds which Ciss had brought him had established him in practice in a thoroughfare which was generally believed to be the high road to Merrion Square. Westland Row was lucky. One doctor after another had stepped from that dingy highway to the splendors of Merrion Square. Why, Maurice Grace's three predecessors in the house he occupied were now men of light and leading in the profession.

Lady Dromore had everything but a sense of humor. And poor Ciss's married estate

seemed to her only not tragical because Maurice Grace still lived in a state of rapt ecstasy in his possession of Ciss, coupled with a wonder at his own bewildering good fortune which Lady Dromore found very touching.

She saw Ciss in a dark little house shaken incessantly by the roar and rattle of the trains. A dingy servant opened the door for her, on her first and succeeding visits; the face of the servant might be changed, but the dinginess was an established thing. Through a hall floored with yellowish brown oil-cloth, papered with a horrible shiny paper to match, Lady Dromore went up a staircase of an equally depressing aspect and was shown into a room overlooking the noisy street, where she would find Ciss playing with the baby, or Ciss would find her, flying in a rapture to welcome her. Ciss in the hideous room might have had a certain humorous appeal to those gifted with the most desirable of all the gifts. But Lady Dromore could have wept over her.

Lord Dromore never accompanied his wife on these visits. He could not have endured to find Ciss in the dreary house, which looked across to the windows above a butcher's shop, kept with a brightness very unlike poor Ciss's dingy windows.

Ciss never seemed to notice the ugliness of the room. There was a wall-paper of bluish

white sprawled over with great leaves picked out with a line of base gilding. The wall-paper was grimy in parts. A row of chairs covered in black shiny horse-hair stood round it at intervals, and there was a sofa of the same depressing material. The carpet, a bright Brussels, with a design of cabbage roses and ferns, was littered with the baby's belongings and Ciss's. There were a couple of dogs who did not hesitate to bring their bones into Ciss's drawing-room, where in those early days they kept company on the carpet's roses with the baby's discarded crusts. There were red moreen curtains at the windows, a band of bright yellow bordering them. On a dusty day in summer the dust was over everything; in winter the room was so dark that Lady Dromore invariably sat on the dogs in her efforts to find a vacant chair.

Ciss was as beautiful as ever, but vague, in the clouds, like a lovely, absent-minded child.

She had a visitor one day when Lady Dromore was present, a stout, elderly person, dressed, on a warm, dusty day, in black satin, black velvet and bugles, whose eyes roamed in wondering contempt over Ciss's drawing-room.

“Did you ever see such a glory-hole?” she asked, when Ciss had gone up to fetch Baby. Ciss had omitted to introduce them, and Lady Dromore had not impressed Ciss's visitor, who

was as little aware of the exquisiteness of her gown of dull blue *crêpe de Chine*, with its touches of old lace, as she was of the subtle distinction of her face and figure. "It's a shame, so it is, to see that poor husband of hers slaving himself to death for her and she keeping such a house as this for him. I wonder where at all she came from? None of us know. She can't be much, anyway, to keep her house like this."

Lady Dromore was saved from answering by the return of Ciss with her baby held high in her arms. She looked from one to the other, from Lady Dromore to Mrs. Mooney, with a delightful arch appeal. She was like that Madonna of Annibale Carracci who lifts a finger in warning at the little St. John laying a mischievous dimpled finger on the sleeping infant's foot. She was like Sir Joshua's Mrs. Linley—is it?—with a finger on her lip as she looks down at the sleeping child in her arms.

She held the little Cecilia for Lady Dromore's inspection. On the two exquisite heads, close together, came a shaft of sunlight lighting the pale hair to gold.

Mrs. Mooney had reared eleven children, so supposed she knew something about them. She, too, desired to inspect Baby and to be taken into council about her teething and other matters.

But Ciss was not the comfortable sort. At the first word of teething and teething-fits and convulsions she snatched up Cecilia and fled. When she came back without her, laughing and flushed, a long piece of her hair falling over her shoulder, Mrs. Mooney rose with an air of offended dignity and took her departure. She had not even been offered tea.

“Must you go so soon?” asked Ciss, with the air of remoteness which made the words an added offense.

“She never asked me if I’d a mouth on me,” Mrs. Mooney reported to her husband; “but stood there smirking at me as though she could see through me. I don’t believe she heard a word I said. Grace may be all very well in himself, but *she’ll* never bring him the patients. After all, MacInerney has done me very well up to this; he may do me for the rest of my time. I’m not going to put myself out and change my doctor to be treated like that.”

But Ciss, quite unconscious that she had alienated a good patient and influential person within her small circle from her husband, clapped her hands like a child when the door had closed behind Mrs. Mooney.

“I don’t know what they come for, Edith,” she said. “They are always coming and they don’t like me a bit, even when I try to be civil to them for Maurice’s sake.” She had learned

to call her husband Maurice instead of Paul; he had made a point of it which had mystified her at first. "Now let us enjoy ourselves, Edith. You are going to take me to the Shelbourne for tea like the last time, aren't you? And afterwards we shall sit in the Green and you will tell me about Dromore and the children."

So cheerfully did Ciss whistle her husband's patients down the wind.



## CHAPTER III

### CECILIA

CECILIA GRACE grew up to a solitary life—which, however, she never found lonely.

She was a child of passionate attachments, and she adored her exquisite young mother. Ciss would never be anything but young; the suffering of the past, which had been great enough to snap something or other in the delicate mechanism of her brain, had given her immunity, it seemed, from future suffering.

The child grew up to a vision of a softly-smiling, rose-and-white mother, with blue eyes like the eyes of a child, perpetually looking outward and not inward, as the eyes of other grown people looked. Mamma was always ready to play with Baby. If Baby was ill or fretful, mamma generally kept out of the way, and left the small creature to the care of Nannie D'Arcy, one of those soft-bosomed, soft-eyed Irish nurses, whom a kind providence had sent to be Cecilia's nurse.

Cecilia learned quite early that mamma was not to be troubled, that she could not be expected to know anything of a small person's

discomforts or ailments, or needs. If there was anything Nannie could not supply, then the right person to go to was papa.

Papa was always busy; but not so busy that he could not spare time for his little daughter. He had a carriage by the time Cecilia was five or six years old; and he sometimes took her with him on his rounds. She waited, quiet as a mouse, while he visited his patients; and when he rejoined her and his attention was distracted from her—for he sometimes read and often made notes in a book, being a very busy man, and having to do his work at all times and in all places—she never disturbed him. It was quite enough pleasure for her to be seated beside him, looking up at his preoccupied, swarthy face, under the dark hair which had so rapidly become sprinkled with gray.

Cecilia adored mamma and was fond of her nurse and friends and the dogs and Granny. But after all her great devotion was for papa.

While they were yet living in Westland Row, before the great rush of business had come to Maurice Grace, they often went off on a Sunday morning, after an early Mass, to the little farm under the mountains which belonged to Granny, Maurice Grace's mother. The Bawn Farm, its house and all its belongings, made up an enchanted land for Cecilia. The little old-fashioned cottage under deep thatch

was a maze of bowery, flowery rooms, full of the most wonderful things to a child's imagination. The very flowers on the wall-paper, the pattern of the faded chintz on the bed-hangings, remained in Cecilia's mind in later years as something known in fairyland. There were green spotted mirrors, very dim in the darkness of the rooms, their gilt frames swathed in yellow tarlatan against the flies. There were wonderful patchwork quilts on the beds, the pattern of which Cecilia used to trace in the early summer mornings when she slept at the Bawn Farm, while all the house was sleeping but herself; when the baby starlings were awake and calling for breakfast in their nests in the thatch, and the calves under the apple trees in the orchard were clamoring for their steaming morning buckets of milk. Her little fingers would go from one gay delightful patch to another, tracing them as though they were countries on a map, and the delight of it would last till Bridget, the big, pleasant maid-of-all-work at the farm, would come in to dress Miss Cecilia for breakfast, a wonderful breakfast in the farmhouse kitchen, where she had dainties unheard of at home. Delicious days were those at the Bawn Farm, where Cecilia was the apple of her eye to old Mrs. Grace, and knew every one by name, when she was carted about the fields on a load of scented hay, and was

friends with the farm-horses and the dogs and cats and every living thing on the farm.

Once Cecilia heard a conversation between her Granny and Father Philip, a rosy cheeked, benevolent old priest, who patted Cecilia's head whenever he met her at her Granny's and looked at her with a pleased air.

"Unspotted from the world," said Father Phil; "that's what they are, mother and child. Why, they're shining white; that's what they are—shining white."

"The child has her wits about her, glory be to God!" said Granny; "as for the mother, why she is just a child that never grew up. I often think it's hard on my poor boy—such a good boy. But there; sure he's as fond and as proud of her as though an angel in heaven had stooped to him. I'd rather have her, myself, more like other people."

"It's maybe God's way of keeping her unspotted from the world," said Father Phil.

And then they discovered the child, hidden away behind the window curtains, with a big volume of *Æsop's fables* in her lap, and they seemed a little dismayed at the discovery.

Cecilia startled her father a day or two later by repeating a portion of this conversation to him. She had been turning it over in her small mind.

"I heard Father Phil and Granny talking,"

she said; "and I think it was about mamma and me. Granny said mamma was a child that had never grown up. How could mamma be a child when she is ever so many years older than me?"

"It was only grown-up people's way of talking," said Maurice Grace, "which little girls cannot be expected to understand. But I think it meant that mother is something very precious which you and I shall have to take care of, little girl. You understand that, don't you, Cecilia? that mother is the most precious thing in the world, and that you and I must never think of ourselves when it is a question of mother?"

"Yes, I understand," little Cecilia said sedately; but it was very doubtful if she did.

It was part of Maurice Grace's carefulness of Ciss that when the time came at which he might have moved into Merrion Square he did not, but still remained at the dingy house in Westland Row. But he only used the place for professional duties; and Ciss and the child were established in a little house out in the country near the mountains, hidden away behind green trellises in a garden of flowers. He had a tender sensitiveness about what might be said of Ciss, what doubtless was said, that she was unlike other people, "not all there," and so on. The callers were less likely

to follow Ciss to the White Cottage, and it was easier for him to say to those who suggested calling on his wife that Ciss was delicate and unable to keep up the social observances. It was a hardship to him, professionally, to have a wife who received his patients when they happened to come her way with a sweet, vacant smile and had plainly nothing to say to them. But he would not have changed anything about Ciss if he could.

During the rush and pressure of the days he thought of Ciss at the White Cottage with a quiet joy. The other doctors' helpmates bustled about, helping their husbands practically by paying and receiving calls, by dispensing hospitality, by keeping themselves and their carriages and horses perpetually in evidence. It was a handicap to Maurice Grace that his wife did not do the same; but he would not have exchanged Ciss for the most efficient of helpmates.

As the years passed Ciss secluded herself more and more within the walls of the White Cottage. People said between themselves that there was something odd about Dr. Grace's wife; and even the most persistent, whether from real kindness or a meaner motive, came in time to leave off ringing the bell at the gate of the White Cottage, since the mistress was always out or not at home, or indisposed.

Nannie D'Arcy and her sister Bride were now in charge of the White Cottage, where they guarded the mistress and Miss Cecilia and all the master's interests with loving carefulness.

Cecilia for some years went to and fro between a neighboring convent school and her home. The distance was very short, and it was quite safe for the child to come and go on foot and alone. For all mother and daughter saw of the city beyond, it might almost as well have been non-existent. But presently it was decided that Cecilia should have a few years in the boarding-school attached to the convent, where she would have companions of her own age. She had been growing up somewhat too serious and thoughtful, and it was her father's prescription for her that she should have the companionship of children of her own age.

Cecilia was popular at school, where her beauty and height and grace, her look of wild-rose innocence, her lovely voice, made her the object of a considerable amount of school-girl adoration. Many of the nuns' pupils were girls of the middle classes; the daughters of farmers and the better-class of shopkeepers in Dublin as well as the daughters of Dublin's professional men and officials who happened to belong to the old religion.

The nuns made a great pet of Cecilia. They said among themselves in their hour of demure

chatter and gaiety in the community-room or the garden, that Cecilia was cut out for a nun; at least the young nuns said it. Some of the others, notably that notable nun, Mother Margaret, disagreed. Cecilia, with her hands on the organ, might have sat for her namesake in heaven. Cecilia crowned with roses on Rosary Sunday might have been Elizabeth of Hungary with the beggars' bread turned to roses in her lap, or Dorothy gathering roses in heaven to send for a sign to her pagan lover on earth.

She might also have been Proserpine gathering flowers in the meadows of Enna; but the nuns would not have thought of that. The nuns, who had transformed the god Pan on the old organ, over the yellow keys of which Cecilia stretched her young, slender fingers, into a most unedifying David, covering the shaggy hide and cleft feet with a crimson mantle and the wild hair with a kingly crown, would assuredly not have likened Cecilia to any creation of the pagans.

Cecilia stayed on at the convent for her music and singing long after she might have been supposed, according to the very unexacting standards of those among whom she lived, to have "finished her education." In fact, at an age when her contemporaries were going to dances and having lovers, she still stayed on

at the convent and was well content that it should be so. She was still very young for her age.

She was quite well aware of what high destinies some of the nuns allotted to her. "We cannot all be nuns," they would say, with a compassionate sigh for the less favored than themselves. "Some of us must marry." Cecilia listening to them had nothing to say against the higher destiny. The woman was not yet awake in Cecilia.

She was, of course, one of the shining lights of the school, and was often quoted as an example to be followed to the more turbulent ones. The young nuns already treated her with an air of her being one of themselves; and some of the more enterprising of the school-girls had thoughts of asking her to spend a portion of the vacation with them, or at least to visit them at their houses. The school was innocently proud of Cecilia. It would be good to show off her grace and beauty to the parents and brothers and friends at home, feeling a reflected glory from the admiration she would excite.

Then happened suddenly an event of the first magnitude, something quite unprecedented in the convent history.

Hitherto the great personages of the convent feast-days and breaking-up days had

been ecclesiastics, reverend and old. To kiss the Bishop's ring, to receive a kindly word of praise and encouragement from some such saintly person, had hitherto been enough to bring the happy flush to the cheeks of the girls of Mount St. Mary's. Now there was something widely different.

A very great personage indeed, not in the spiritual order, was visiting Dublin. The very great personage, accompanied by his consort, had intimated an intention of paying Mount St. Mary's a visit.

For days after the official intimation had been received the convent was in a state of breathless excitement. An address of welcome had to be written and got by heart by a pupil who could be trusted not to take stage-fright at the important moment. A concert had to be got up, and Mother Margaret, the music mistress, was incessantly busy, arranging what her pupils were to sing and practicing them in their parts. There was to be a lunch, and Sister Pélagie, the French nun who presided over the kitchen, was all but distracted. There was a frightful holocaust of birds in the poultry yard, of innocent beasts on the farmery; Mount St. Mary's prided itself that it was self-providing as well as self-supporting. Such scrubbing and whitewashing and dusting and bees-waxing, where all had

been spotless before, was never heard of at Mount St. Mary's. The girls who were to take a prominent part in the reception of the great personages were all having new frocks to the design of Mother Magdalen, who once, out in the world, had been a modiste.

Cecilia was to sing, and Mother Margaret's choice for her fell on some of the old Irish songs which are so full of wailing love and sorrow. Cecilia, with her pale gold head and exquisite color, in her frock of Indian muslin, a broad, green sash across her young breast, a wreath of shamrocks in her hair, was going to be an immense credit to them. Dumpy little school-girls, with snub noses and freckles, swelled and grew tall within themselves when they thought how Cecilia was going to appear to the great personages.

At last the day came; a glorious June day, when everything was looking its best: all the roses in bloom in the gardens; the trees still light green against a sky of pearl and sapphire the hills grayly blue; the cut hay in the meadows smelling deliciously.

The excitement at the convent was at fever-heat. The nuns and the children had been praying for fine weather, and their prayers had been answered. Hardly an eye had closed in the dormitory on the night preceding the great occasion.

They were all waiting in line before the long, low white convent when the glittering procession of carriages and horsemen swung round the corner of the drive and drew up in front of the Reverend Mother. The scene was a charming one; and the great personage, who was nothing if not a diplomat, expressed himself very graciously concerning it.

Everything went well. Aileen Dunne, who had to read the address of welcome neither ran away nor dropped in her place as she had prophesied she would. The lunch did honor to Sister Pélagie, and was much enjoyed by the great personage. His quiet, beautiful consort said little, but smiled her kindness on nuns and children. The time approached for the concert at which Cecilia, in the thoughts of the generous school-girls, was destined to have her triumph.

Fortunately, the long, double drawing-room of the old eighteenth-century house, when people built as though for time and immortality, was capable of holding a good many people.

The girls at the back craned their necks to see the great personages, and the lesser great personages accompanying them, who sat in gilt French chairs with the Reverend Mother and some of the older nuns; and also to see the performers who were to do the convent credit

or discredit according as they acquitted themselves.

The first item on the programme, a piano-forte duet, was clapped politely by the guests. Next there was a violin performance, with which the great personages expressed themselves greatly pleased.

At last came the moment the school-girls waited for so eagerly. Mother Margaret took her place at the piano. Cecilia Grace came forward and stood on the platform, her song held in hands that shook visibly, her eyes down, her color coming and going. For an instant she looked as though she might take flight; she wore such an air as a Greek sculptor might have caught and made immortal. Then—a look passed between her and Mother Margaret. She braced herself. The nuns smiled at one another with an air of immense relief, and the pure young voice rose in the first bars of the song—

“I would I were on yonder hill.”

When she had finished, the great personage asked for an encore. He was obviously delighted with Cecilia and her singing.

“Who is the lovely creature?” his consort asked of Mother Paul, who was nearest to her.

Again Cecilia played a harp solo in which she looked more beautiful than before. As the

last silvery notes died away in distance there was a stillness; then the great personages led the applause.

Cecilia bowing on the platform, as she had been told to do, lifted her shy, bewildered eyes and glanced beyond those dazzling front rows to the familiar faces. There were her school-fellows clapping furiously; the sight of their good everyday faces gave her courage. There was Gran, in her black bonnet with purple ribbons and her black plush cape, among the near friends of the performers who had been permitted to be present. Gran was looking delighted. She sat a little isolated among the mothers and maiden aunts and married sisters of Cecilia's school-fellows, but she seemed quite unaware of her isolation.

Cecilia's eyes came back shyly to her harp by which she was standing. On their way something, some one, intercepted them. A young gentleman who sat in the last of the second row of chairs was looking at Cecilia with something in his expression which all at once made Cecilia feel shyer than she had felt before the kind eyes of the great personage, the mild gaze of the stately little lady by his side, or even the lorgnettes of some of the Viceregal party.

For a second she stood irresolute. Then, unconscious of the fact that the great person-

age's encore implied a command, she glided away from the platform and sought the comfortable shelter of the room behind, which served as a dressing-room on such occasions as these.

"What happened you?" asked Mother Margaret, tender as a real mother. "You were getting on so well. Every one is delighted with you. You must go back and play again. Courage, Cecilia, for the sake of the convent. Go back and play to them, child."

Cecilia went back and played. But she looked no more towards the chair at the end of the second row, although she was aware that all the time some one watched her from there whose gaze made her feel more perturbed than the admiration of the great people.



## CHAPTER IV

### NEW KIN

“I WONDER why mamma has not come,” said Cecilia. “It was bad enough that papa was too busy; but mamma? She would have been so pleased.”

“Time wasn’t made for the likes of your mother,” said Gran. “As like as not she’ll come streelin’ in when it’s all over.”

They were strolling in the grounds while the great personages were entertained to tea. There were many groups of school children and their friends, nuns and their friends, similarly engaged. It was a great day for the convent, and general holiday of course. As soon as the great people had departed the little people were to have their tea.

Cecilia had slipped away with Gran, quite unconscious that the Reverend Mother was asking for her. It had been an ordeal, and she was very glad it was over, very glad to be with kind homely Gran, away from all the eyes and the admiration.

She wanted to be alone to think. Who was the young gentleman who had looked at her

with such admiration? And what was there in his look more than ordinary admiration? Cecilia had never any secrecies in her innocent life. Now she was conscious of the possession of a secret, and it made her hot and shy. What did it mean when a gentleman looked at a girl in that way? She was thrilled with sudden blushes. Not for worlds would she have had Gran know that she was thinking of a strange young gentleman who had looked at her and sent something quivering from his heart to her heart. She felt her heart all of a tremor inside her slender young body. What did he mean by looking at her like that? And what would the nuns think, the nuns so many of whom had dedicated her to God? Would they think her wicked? Cecilia felt dreadfully frightened and ashamed of her thrills and tremors. And mamma! It was very disappointing that mamma had not heard her play.

Some of Gran's old wise words at her ears came upon her like a sudden douche of cold water.

"It isn't the praise of the likes o' them that matters, avourneen, for sure they've nothing to do with us nor we with them. 'Tis only a little entertainment for them. 'Tis what we are in the eyes of God, and what we are to them that love us and belong to us, that matters. Never have your head turned by the

like o' them, acushla, for sure it stands to reason that they go away and forget that they ever so much as laid eyes on you."

"Are they all like that, Gran?" asked Cecilia, turning appealing eyes to the old face; she felt suddenly chilled and wounded. "Do you think people like them are never friends with people like us?"

"What nonsense is in your head, child?" Mrs. Grace asked, with a tenderness that belied the harsh-sounding words. "Friendship, indeed! 'Tis thinking of us like the dirt under their feet they'd be. They didn't show much nature to your poor mother, did they, those fine relations of hers? If it wasn't that she had my boy to depend on. . . . There, sure you don't know anything about it. What's the good of raking up the old troubles?"

"I remember," said Cecilia, vaguely, "some one who used to come to see mother—a cousin of hers, I think. She was very sweet. Such a soft, lovely voice, and her way with a little child so caressing. I don't think she could ever have thought of any one as the dirt under her feet."

"'Tis the likes of her that's the proudest. The last time that ever she came to see your mother 'twas at the Bawn Farm. Your mother was staying with me for a few days;

and her ladyship was in Dublin, and she drove down to see her. The Patrick Graces were here the same day. Nothing to be ashamed of, the Patrick Graces. Why, he's thought a deal about. The world knows he could be a Member of Parliament if he liked. He leaves it for Bernard. I remember Patrick Grace's first pair of boots; there was a subscription got up to buy him a pair so that he might get a job, and I gave a shilling. Look at him now! He owns five farms, and Ballykilleen House isn't a place to be sneezed at. And Rosy Grace won't as much as lift her handkerchief if she lets it drop; she'll ring a bell for a servant to do it. She was very genteel that day her ladyship came, was Rosy, with a deal to say for herself. She said afterwards that she didn't want her ladyship to think she was nobody. And it was cousin this and cousin that to your mother; and she tellin' the cute things young Barney said and did. Her ladyship didn't get in a word with your mother edgeways. And so after a time she went away."

They had wandered down by the fishponds, along the Dark Walk, its many trees hollowed out in little grottoes containing a figure of the Madonna or some saint with a vase of flowers before it; they were in a coppice through which a path ran that led by a stile into the hay-

field where the new hay was gathered in fragrant heaps.

Gran's reminiscences of the Patrick Graces had come as a cold shock on Cecilia's trembling rapture. She detested the Patrick Graces, father, mother, and son; most of all Bernard Grace, with his black curly hair parted in the middle, his white teeth and heavy black moustache, his dark, coarse comeliness, his eyes, yellow in the whites of them, which perturbed her when she came under their glances with a perturbation very different from what she had felt for the strange gentleman's glances, something much more distinctly painful and unpleasant. She could not endure Bernard Grace; it made her "goose-fleshy" when he looked under his heavy lashes at her and tried to touch her hand. But Gran was quite proud of the Patrick Graces and their social advancement; so Cecilia kept her thoughts to herself.

They sat down on one of the heaps of hay, Gran having first lifted her new maroon cashmere skirt so that it should not come in contact with the hay. She was quite unaware of how she had brought Cecilia's thoughts to the ground with a jerk. She herself had a great admiration for Bernard Grace, who rode his horse like a gentleman, and had always a couple of dogs at his heels, and was very

shrewd and careful of his money while attending all the races in the country; who always had a horse or dog to show, so that he had the reputation of being a sportsman, or thought he had, without its costing him very much money.

Gran had her hopes and aspirations after a marriage between Cecilia and Bernard Grace which she had kept to herself. She had an idea that her son would not contemplate with any equanimity the marriage, however far ahead, of his young daughter; and there was no one else with whom she could discuss the matter. But she often chuckled to herself as at a pleasant thought over the possibility of a marriage between the son of the distant cousin Grace who had preceded her Maurice in lifting the name out of the soil, and her granddaughter, Cecilia.

Meanwhile, Cecilia, sitting on the hay, her eyes staring straight before her, was picturing that scene at the Bawn Farm. She could imagine Mrs. Patrick Grace asserting herself in the presence of the lady whom she covertly suspected of looking down on her. Cecilia knew Mrs. Patrick Grace's way when she asserted herself, and the knowledge made her wince. She could hear her mother's light, sweet laugh, and see her incongruous face and figure in the low-ceiled dark room, its table

set with plenty of good food but little refinement. There was something vulgar about Mrs. Patrick's voice and face when she would be at ease which came into Cecilia's mind gratingly. No wonder her ladyship, finding herself overborne, had taken her departure.

Footsteps approached quickly over the greenly-growing, velvety grass. Cecilia looked up with a start. A lady and gentleman were standing before her. The gentleman was lifting his hat and smiling; his eyes once again sent electric thrills through Cecilia. They were gray and bright, and his dark hair was ever so lightly threaded with gray, although he was obviously quite young. He was slender and elegant, with a look of race about him. As he stood there smiling he seemed to Cecilia a very fine gentleman.

The lady was quite young also, a little person, and a brunette. She had the lightest, daintiest of figures. She was smiling at Cecilia with a friendly smile.

"I am your cousin, Betty Wynne," she said. "I have only just discovered who you are. You are Cecilia Grace, are you not? But of course you are. We are enchanted by your singing. Allow me to introduce Lord Kilrush."

Cecilia stood up with an air of bewilderment from her seat on the hay. The young lady was

exquisitely though simply dressed. Her embroidered muslin dress, her wide, white hat wreathed with roses, the little pearls at her ears, the dainty parasol she carried, made Cecilia feel like a village girl. So that was how people looked in *his* world. Her eyes fell before Lord Kilrush's, which had something merry and kind added to that other intangible thing that had made Cecilia hot and cold, cold and hot.

"Reverend Mother has sent us in search of you," went on Miss Betty Wynne. "What a wonderful cousin you are! I am tremendously proud of you. Their Majesties want to speak to you—to thank you for the pleasure you have given them. How I envy you! My dear cousin, the whole world will be envying you if you go on like this."

Miss Wynne had a color in her cheeks like a peach. Her dark eyes were very bright—she looked all life and movement, like a very bright little bird.

"We may take her, may we not?" she said, turning with a gracious and deferential air to Gran, sitting silent on the heap of hay. "She will come back to you again when their Majesties have spoken with her."

In her own mind she had put down Gran as her cousin's nurse. Such tender ties existed in the country of their birth between nurses

and nurslings that it seemed the most natural thing in the world to find this homely old body taking part in her child's triumph.

"Mother will be so excited," Miss Wynne went on, "when I tell her about you. I am staying on a visit with Lady Inverary. I had no idea that you were at school here; but, of course, mother had told me about you; and if she hadn't, I should have known the moment you appeared who you were by your likeness to Cousin Ciss whose picture is on the writing-table in mother's room."

She laid a hand gloved in soft pale kid on Cecilia's arm. Cecilia moved a step or two with her, then came to a standstill.

"Before we go, Cousin Betty, let me introduce you and Lord Kilrush to my father's mother."

It had hardly come within Cecilia's province to effect introductions, but no one could have found a flaw in her manner of doing it. Lord Kilrush lifted his hat. Miss Betty held out her hand to take the old hand that was roughened and coarsened with toil, the hand from which Mrs. Grace had very willingly removed the white cotton glove which the great occasion demanded.

Cecilia was disappointed with Gran, hurt by her manner of receiving Cousin Betty's advances. Mrs. Grace looked down at Betty's

hand as though she did not see it, and made a stiff little curtsy, with a most unfriendly expression.

“Come, Cecilia!” said Miss Wynne, as though she had not noticed Gran’s unfriendliness; “you must not keep their Majesties waiting, you know. That would be an unpardonable sin.”

She slipped a hand through Cecilia’s arm, with a frank air of girlish camaraderie, and drew her along with her.

“I shall be back very soon, Gran,” said Cecilia, looking back over her shoulder.

“Don’t hurry for me!” Gran replied, in a chillier tone than Cecilia had ever heard from her in all her young life.

“I fear we’ve vexed your grandmother,” Betty Wynne said, almost racing Cecilia along the garden path. “But there was really no time to make explanations. I promised Reverend Mother I should find you. She had already sent out half a dozen scouts. I am so glad that it was I who found you after all.”

Lord Kilrush followed them at a more leisurely pace. He wanted to see how the lovely school-girl was going to comport herself in the presence of royalty. He said to himself that he had never seen anything quite so beautiful as Cecilia. As he said it he caught sight of

a lady crossing the grass who was so startlingly like Cecilia that it could only be her mother.

It was Ciss—Ciss with her inimitable air of languid elegance, trailing a lace dress across the grass, an exquisite old scarf falling about her shoulders as it could only have fallen about Ciss's.

Cecilia had not seen her mother, and Ciss had no idea of pursuing Cecilia and Betty. She sank into a seat placed at a convenient point under the shade of a tree and sat there smiling faintly, while she made a pattern in the gravel at her feet with the point of her parasol.

Lord Kilrush was mystified and interested. Who could they be, these cousins of the Dromores, of whom he had never heard? And the old peasant woman who had scowled in Betty's winsome face? How could it be that she was grandmother to the exquisite creature, and so in some sort connected with people as proud as the Dromores?

Cecilia, meanwhile, had arrived in the long drawing-room where the great personages were holding an audience. Some one passed away from between her and the presences, and she saw clearly for the first time the pleasant-faced gentleman who looked like a country squire, and the august little lady by his side with her

wonderful air of distinction and her immortal youthfulness.

The gentleman spoke a few kind and cordial words of praise to Cecilia; the lady smiled on her with an expression at once sad and gentle, and Cecilia felt her young heart leap up with a sudden passionate admiration and affection. She bowed over the Queen's hand to kiss it. Her head swam with excitement and pleasure. She bent low before their Majesties and the audience was over.

"I wish they did it half as well at Court," said Betty Wynne in Kilrush's ear. "They are so gauche often, though they have been trained and rehearsed over and over. Now, isn't my cousin Cecilia adorable?"

Lord Kilrush agreed that she was adorable, looking into Miss Wynne's eyes with an expression which said that there was some one else adorable as well as Cecilia. He and Betty had met last spring at the Viceregal Court and had danced through the Castle season together. Lord Kilrush had learned his dancing abroad, and danced with uncommon grace, and as for Betty, why, Betty was a born dancer. As a child she had danced through life instead of walking. Now, often enough, she found it hard to accommodate her paces to the soberness required by her grown-up condition.

Cecilia, turning away from her audience in a dazed state of mind, was just in time to catch sight of the expression on Lord Kilrush's face as he bent to speak to her dazzling cousin. Before they could look for her she had slipped away through the crowd, to rejoin Gran on her heap of hay.



## CHAPTER V

### GRAN

GRAN was in a very bad temper. Her face had grown unbecomingly dark and red under the purple ribbons. She lifted her eyes at the sound of Cecilia's approach and there was an angry light in them.

"Well," she said, "so you've lost your fine new friends already! I was thinkin' they wouldn't long find any use for you."

Cecilia was feeling a bit forlorn herself. She had dropped from the mood of exaltation in which she had bowed before the King and Queen. Perhaps it was true, and they had not any use for her. Certainly, Betty and Lord Kilrush had looked as though they needed no one but themselves when she had left them.

"I slipped away, Gran," she said gently. "They did not see me go. Let us go back to the house. It is really much quieter than the gardens on a day like this. Don't you want to hear about the King and Queen?"

"Small good the likes o' them will ever do to the likes o' you," said Gran, acridly. "I'm beginnin' to think it was all foolishness, and

unsettlin' your mind. Sure the likes o' them'll pay compliments and think no more about it, only turnin' the heads of foolish girls."

"It won't turn my head," said Cecilia, sweetly. "I am so sorry, Gran. I thought you would be so pleased and proud. Anyhow, come away to the end of the field. There is such a pretty place I want to show you. We call it the Lakes of Killarney. There is such a lovely little stream there with little fishes in it. It comes straight down from the mountains, and it is so clear that you can see every pebble in it and they look like jewels."

"What nonsense have you about the Lakes of Killarney?" grumbled Gran, not to be won from her bad temper, but getting to her feet all the same.

She had no great wish that she and Cecilia should be found in the same place in case the fine folks came to seek the girl out again. She held some acres of land from Lord Kilrush, although she had never set eyes on the gentleman before, being accustomed to transact her business with and pay her rent to his men of business. She thought of "the landlord" as a person of another sphere. What could he want with Cecilia only to turn her head? She had never liked her son's marriage, and it had been no comfort to her that it linked him with one of the proudest families in Ireland. But

she had come to accept Ciss in time, even to love her. And she loved Cecilia better. In her narrow, ignorant, loving old heart there were reasons why Cecilia should be kept apart from the Dromores.

And there was Ciss coming to them across the grass, swinging her scarf over her arms with an air which many women would have given a good deal to emulate. During the years she had been Maurice Grace's wife she had never lost her strange air of elegance, the air of one of the goddesses painted by Reynolds or Romney.

"I am so sorry to be late," she said. "The day was so delicious that I fell asleep and missed the great hour. I have been looking about for you everywhere."

The old woman's gaze softened as it fell on her.

"You ought to have been there," she said; "she was frettin' that you wasn't there. She's been hobnobbin' with kings and queens," she went on, with a grim air of pleasantry. "Her singin' and harp-playin' delighted them all. There wasn't one of them like our Cecilia; I will say that for her. But as I was sayin' to her, 'tisn't what we seem in the eyes of men but what we are in the eyes of God that matters."

Ciss seemed to wave away her mother-in-

law's pious wisdom. Ciss never seemed to have serious thoughts. Any grave utterance from her lips would have been as quaintly incongruous as from the lips of a child.

"What are you down here for?" she asked, with an evident air of distaste. "I came to see the King and Queen. Let us go back and see them. Their carriage with outriders was waiting for them just now. I hope they will not be gone without my seeing them. Just think! I have never seen the Queen. Is she as young-looking as they say?"

She had turned them round-about and was leading them back to the enclosed grounds, from which came the sound of voices and laughter. That was a strange day for the convent garden, usually so quiet and given over to the school-children and the nuns. As they crossed the garden they could see under the trees of the lawn the scarlet and gold of the King's escort: they could hear the champing of the horses and the clank of accoutrements. In the garden there were some very smart ladies, accompanied by men obviously of their world, and gazing about them with lively curiosity as at something unseen before. There were also the parents and relatives of the school-girls, homelier folk, with less or no pretension to elegance, and all much interested in the fine folk. And there were groups of

the little plump girls, clinging fondly to the arms of brisk young nuns, who were scurrying along, their veils lifted by the summer breeze.

It was indeed a very strange scene in a convent garden.

“Let us hurry,” said Ciss, avoiding a nun who would have intercepted them. “I do want to see the Queen. Edith Dromore told me about her when she was presented at Court. But that was a long time ago. Ah! those are the friends I saw you with, Cecilia. The girl is like some one I know.”

They were walking straight into the arms of Miss Betty Wynne and Lord Kilrush, along a straight path. They could hardly have avoided them if they would.

“Why, we have searched the whole place for you!” the young lady began. “I was quite determined not to go without seeing you.”

She turned in a bewildered way from Cecilia to Ciss.

“It is mother’s cousin Ciss,” she said. “Surely it is mother’s cousin Ciss. She has never forgotten you; and she will be so pleased to know that we have met.”

None of the four noticed that old Mrs. Grace had remained behind. She sat down on a seat, and, untying her bonnet-strings, fanned herself with her handkerchief. The day was very hot. But it was not altogether the heat

that had upset Gran. She looked after the group in the distance, and her face was full of anger.

Ciss was as pleased as a child with the new-found cousin. She remembered Betty, a dancing, brown-haired, brown-skinned child, as different as possible from the other children of the Dromores. Betty had been something vital, positive, in a nursery where the other children looked like pastel drawings with the loveliness of life added. Betty—why, Betty must be twenty-five. She had been four years old when Ciss had seen her last.

Things long forgotten came back to Ciss at the sight of Betty's bronze eyes and hair and her honest, charming face. She remembered the other children. What was Dermot doing? and Brian? It was so hard to realize that they were grown up, older than Cecilia. And there was Guy whom she had never seen. And Sheila? And Oona? What? Dermot a soldier and Brian in the navy? And Guy at Eton? Sheila engaged to be married; and Oona, her father's right hand, a very serious young lady devoted to all manner of things that might ameliorate the lot of the people. Wonderful! Wonderful!

But how did it come—Ciss's beautiful white brow puckered itself into lines of bewilderment—how did it come that it had been so long

since she and Edith Dromore had met? Ciss had a way of forgetting the passage of time. She had not seemed to miss her cousin's visits when they had ceased. Now it came to her all of a sudden that they had ceased, and a long time ago.

Betty knew that mother would be delighted. Cousin Ciss's picture was always on mother's writing-table among those she loved best. She would be delighted to know that Betty had met cousin Ciss and that Cecilia was such a marvel. And of course Cousin Ciss and Cecilia must visit them at the House of Dromore. Betty could not imagine why they had not come before, since Ciss was remembered with such love. Papa, too, had always spoken tenderly of cousin Ciss.

Lord Kilrush had to leave them, since he belonged to the Viceregal *entourage*. He went with obvious unwillingness. Lady Inverary, espying them from a distance, sent a pressing message to Betty. Betty had to go. But—Lady Inverary was the most liberal of hostesses and always allowed Betty to do what she wanted—Betty was coming to lunch tomorrow with cousin Ciss, and perhaps, in consideration of how she had acquitted herself, Reverend Mother would let them have Cecilia for the day and they would have a lovely day together.

Ciss and Cecilia, standing side by side, saw the King and Queen and the Viceregal party leave. Ciss was as excited as a child. She chattered as Cecilia had not heard her of the old days and the old friends and wondered why it was that she had let them drop away from her.

“I am never really at home, Cecilia,” she said, with a high little laugh, “among the excellent Dublin *bourgeoisie* whom we should look to for society. I never thought my daughter would grow up among them. Your father understands, and that is why he does not insist on my performing any social duties. He is always so considerate. What a charming young man Lord Kilrush is! I believe I must have known his father. Dear me, it would be pleasant to see the House of Dromore again and all the children and Edith and Dromore.”

Ciss’s exaltation was dashed by Gran’s face when they found her a little later sitting up rigidly on the garden seat, her hands clasped on the crook of her serviceable umbrella. Ciss could be as easily cast down by disapproval as a child. Her transparent face visibly fell at the sight of the resentment in Mrs. Grace’s expression; and for once Cecilia felt angry with Gran.

“Have we kept you waiting too long?” Ciss faltered.

“Never mind me, never mind me,” the old woman said acridly. “ ’Tisn’t likely you could remember me among your fine friends. I’m only your husband’s old mother. Why wouldn’t you give me the go-by?”

Ciss’s lip trembled, and she drew her flowered scarf about her with a little gesture as though she were cold.

“It was my cousin’s daughter,” she said with an attempt at dignity. “Why should I not be glad to see my cousin’s daughter—my cousin, for the matter of that? I am so sorry I have offended you.”

“No offense to me,” said the old woman, rising stiffly. “If you like to run after them that despised you and cast you off ’tis your own affair. I’d like to see my son’s wife havin’ a proper respect for herself, that’s all, and not be leading her daughter astray as well as makin’ little of herself.”

“Maurice would never have spoken to me like that,” said Ciss, piteously. “He wouldn’t like it if he heard you. It always troubles me when people are cross. And it is not true. I am sure no one could have been more pleased to see me than little Betty. I thought she would be such a nice friend for Cecilia.”

“You’re bringin’ her up like yourself, to look down on them she lives among. There are Teresa and Eileen Grace; they are her cousins

too, and handsome nicely-educated little girls. Better keep Cecilia in her own station."

"But her station must be mine," said Ciss again, in piteous protest. "She does not care for those Grace girls. I daresay they are very well in their way; but Cecilia does not care for them, nor for their brother, nor for their father and mother. How could there be anything between them? Indeed I have often wondered how my husband and Patrick Grace could be cousins."

Gran was not mollified by the implied compliment to her son. Rather Ciss's speech had inflamed her wrath.

"I knew you'd teach your child to look down on her father's blood," she said. "Much good your fine relations ever were to you. If it wasn't for my son . . . ."

"Hush, Gran; don't you see you are frightening her?" Cecilia interposed. "Why should you be so angry with us? We have done nothing, and you know that papa cannot bear mamma to be upset. You remember how nervous she was the last time you were cross with her, and how it vexed papa?"

"Teach your grandmother to suck eggs, miss," said Mrs. Grace, forgetting her dignity for once.

Still, it was very evident that Cecilia's speech had not been without effect.

She muttered something that might have been taken as an apology: and, refusing Ciss's entreaties to return with her to the White Cottage, she set off, walking down the dusty country road, at the end of which she would find a tram-car to take her back to the city.



## CHAPTER VI

### WIFE AND HUSBAND

Ciss was one to forget her troubles easily, and she met her husband with an unclouded face when he returned from town just in time for his evening meal. That evening meal had once been a tea-meal, but Ciss had changed it to dinner by the simple method of taking it for granted it was dinner: the innovation at the time had given some considerable offense to old Mrs. Grace.

Maurice Grace came home tired and dusty. He was nearly always tired by the end of his working-day, especially at this time of year, when his holiday was nearly due. To-day a case of his had gone wrong, and it had fretted and worried him dreadfully. He had never learned a useful indifference to the fates of those whose lives and health were in his hands.

His weary face lighted up as he came in by the garden gate and saw Ciss, in her white gown, waiting to receive him at the green-trellised, rose-wreathed porch of the low white house. He said to himself that she was like

a picture; and so she was. Ciss had a way of composing herself unconsciously to make pictures.

Now she came to meet him, made a tender pretense of taking his bag from his hold, and with a hand slipped in his, led him to the porch where a table was spread for tea. He sat down with a sigh on one of the little green-painted seats, and she took off his hat and ran her fingers through his hair. At her touch the tense tiredness of his aspect seemed to relax. His face lost its weary and heavy lines, as he drew her hand down to his lips and kissed it.

“Well, my dearest,” he said, “and how did the great day go off? Was Cecilia a success?”

“She was a huge success. Unfortunately, I was not there to hear her play. I found a little tear in my lace and sat down to mend it, and I believe I must have fallen asleep over it. The garden was so drowsy with the sun and the scent of the flowers; and the smell of the hay and the big bush of elder outside the gate came in to me. And the bees were humming in the mignonette.”

“So you fell asleep till Nannie called you?” said the husband with an indulgent smile. He seemed to love Ciss the better for her childishness.

“Yes: Nannie was horrified when she found

me. She thought I had gone hours before. She just hurried me into my frock. I dare-say I looked a fright."

"I'm sure you were the loveliest woman there."

"The Queen was there," said Ciss simply. "She was dressed all in lavender, so cool and fresh, and she was wearing such lovely pearls. She is even finer and more stately than her pictures. Oh! and Cecilia made a *succès à fou*. She sang and she played the harp, and the King and Queen were visibly delighted; and they sent for her afterwards and complimented her."

"Cecilia will be spoiled for our humdrum ways. There are no kings and queens here, nor princes and princesses."

"As for kings and queens, there are you and I. Cecilia is a loyal subject. And Cecilia herself looked like a princess to-day."

"But where shall we find the prince?" Maurice Grace asked, playing up to her little jest. "Cecilia knows no one. There is Bernard Grace. They say he will be in Parliament. He is a very clever fellow. But hardly Cecilia's prince."

"Certainly not Cecilia's prince," said Ciss, with a haughtiness which was something new in Maurice Grace's knowledge of her. "Cecilia would not look at Bernard Grace.

You are quite right. There is no one to be a prince for Cecilia."

He lifted her hand and held it an instant to his forehead, where there was a dull ache. He did not share his troubles with Ciss, and he had sometimes a vague envy of those of his colleagues who were happily married and could discuss serious matters with their wives. But the touch of Ciss's white hand soothed the pain.

"You made a prince of me, Ciss," he said, "and a poor shabby prince I was, and am, for the matter of that."

He had often wondered how much Ciss remembered of the past. In the quiet calm of her life with him she had lost and forgotten many of the old illusions. But they had not talked about the past; not of late years, since Lady Dromore had ceased to come. He had been relieved when Lady Dromore's visits had ceased. They had always been followed by excitement on Ciss's part. He could tell when she had had a visit by her light, wandering eye, her frequent laugh, her nervous movements. During the years since Lady Dromore had let them be, Ciss had grown almost normal.

He was struck suddenly by an excitement in her manner which had not been there for long. His heart sank a little. Were the Dromores back?

mores coming back after his years of quiet possession? And if so, what might it not bode for his faithful love?

“What is it, Ciss?” he asked, looking up at her. The years had only enhanced her beauty, giving it a lovely, matured softness. Every flowing line, every curve were full of gracious beauty. She was a goddess still, but a married goddess; rather she walked like a goddess, but her face in its innocence and gentleness recalled the face of the Madonna.

“What is it, Ciss? Are you thinking what a poor, ugly, stupid fellow you chose to be your prince?”

She stooped and kissed him. She was not one for frequent caresses, and he always had a sense of some unexampled, unexpected bounty when she offered him a caress.

“I have been thinking,” she said, “that the prince chose a rather damaged princess.”

He looked at her in alarm. She was smiling her smile of perfect joyousness, that seemed to belong to the youth of the world: it was almost soulless, that smile of Ciss’s, with its absence of memories.

“I think I must have been rather queer when you married me,” she went on. “I’m queer still, but not so queer. There was some one else—wasn’t there? Some one who came before you?”

"It is so long ago, Ciss," he said, visibly pale.

"I have been picking out things from the rag-tag-and-bob-tail of my brain," she went on, laughing as though it could not possibly be a matter of great moment to them. "It was like a skein of wool that has been hacked about anyhow; and sometimes a thread broke off short and I could not follow it. And sometimes the thread was quite long and there seemed to be what I wanted at the other end and at last I could follow the thread and find it."

"And what did you find, Ciss?" he asked, in a low voice.

The garden lay golden and tranquil in the afternoon sunshine. He remembered once to have seen a house on fire by daylight on just such a shining June day as this, birds singing, the long shadows slanting in exquisite peace over the gold-green grasses as though there were not that devastating force working its will on the household sanctities of some poor human creature.

"And what did you find, Ciss?"

She turned to him with the most lovely gesture of love and submission.

"I found that there was that other one at the end of the thread," she said: "but I found that I loved you the best."

"The other was more of a proper prince than I," he said humbly.

"I have forgotten him," she answered. "You are the one I love. As I followed the thread, it led me through years of your love for me. What love for a poor cracked princess!"

She laughed again, her light, high laugh that always set her canary to singing.

"The tea will be over-drawn," she said, with an abrupt change of subject. "You know you cannot bear your tea when it is over-drawn. It is just like me to forget. I have always been forgetting, haven't I, Maurice?"

He looked at her with a passionate praise in his eyes.

"I was only afraid," he said, "that the thread might have been leading you away from me back to your own people."

"I should snap it off short if it did. But how odd that you should speak of that. Who do you suppose was among the fine folk who came with the King and Queen? Who?"

His eyes asked the question.

"Why, Betty Wynne. Little Betty. She used to dance like a small angel, or a fairy, or a daffodil. Darling Betty! What a child she was! She has grown up as good and as delightful!"

"So one of the threads led to Betty. I re-

member Betty quite well. She had an earache in the old days and I prescribed for her. She was a charming child—more vivid than the others and with a franker manner. The other children were like Lady Dromore. There were mists about them which one had to penetrate. Betty stood clear in the sun.”

“How well you put it,” Ciss said, in simple wonder.

“I have been growing during these years in which I have loved you.”

In his own mind he was grateful that during the early years the cloud had not lifted from Ciss’s brain. Now that it had begun to lift he was surer of his kingdom. It could not be possible now that any one should come and push him out. All those years he had been trying to become another man against the day when Ciss’s cloud might lift.

“Betty is coming to-morrow,” Ciss went on joyfully. “It is going to be a day of days. We shall fetch Cecilia from the convent: Reverend Mother has given permission. Cecilia will lunch with us, and in the late afternoon we will walk home with her along these delicious lanes. Have you noticed what a year it is for wild roses? There are sheets of them on every hedge. Can’t you get away in time to take Cecilia back? I want you to see Betty.”

“I shall certainly try.”

A little shadow fell over his face. He had remembered the case that was going badly. There was a husband and young children.

“I shall certainly come if I can, my dearest. But I may be too busy. In fact I may be called out to-night. Poor Mrs. Hayes is in a bad way. I left them word to send for me if they thought there was need.”

“I am so sorry, poor thing!” Ciss shrank from the contemplation of painful and unpleasant things. “I hope she will be better to-morrow.”

She poured him out another cup of tea.

“We shall soon have Cecilia at home with us,” she said. “She is really quite too old to be at the convent any longer. This year, I suppose, we shall take her abroad?”

“You will like that, Ciss?”

“I don’t know. She would make a third. We have always been two.”

“But—Cecilia!”

“Oh, of course; being Cecilia it makes a difference. Only it will not be such a rest for you. You will have to show Cecilia things. We cannot just find a spot drenched in sun and beauty and lie out all day in the wind and the sun as we have been used to—because of Cecilia.”

“So long as Cecilia is with us she will be satisfied.”

Ciss narrowed her long, dreamy eyes.

“She might go to the House of Dromore,” she said. “Betty wants her. It is time that Cecilia knew something of her ‘mother’s people.’”

He looked at her, startled. Ciss was picking up the threads with a vengeance.

“We have heard nothing of the Dromores for a long time,” he said. “Such an invitation ought to come from Lady Dromore. The Dromores had lived very well without us all those years.”

“The last time I saw Edith Dromore,” Ciss said, with a dreamy air of reminiscence, “it was at Gran’s. Edith was visiting in Dublin and she drove all the way to see me. Gran was barely civil. Mrs. Patrick Grace was there, with her elder girls. Mrs. Patrick asserted herself more than ever because Edith was there, and Minnie and Fan did nothing but whisper and giggle. Edith and I were not left alone for a moment. But before Edith went Gran took her away and said something to her. I saw that Edith was disturbed when she came back. She never came since.”

“My mother had no right to meddle,” Maurice Grace said, frowning. “Why did you not tell me before?”

“I suppose I must have forgotten. I believe that Gran must have asked Edith not to come any more. She has not forgotten me, Maurice. Betty says that my picture is always on her mother’s writing-table, with Dromore’s and the children’s and a few of her dearest friends. She was always so sweet—to those who knew her. If Edith writes you will let Cecilia go?”

“If Lady Dromore writes I should not feel justified in refusing to let Cecilia go.”

He said to himself that a good deal of water had flowed under the bridges since he had married Cecily Shannon. By sheer hard work and love of his profession he had climbed well up on the ladder: he had exemplified the old story of the hare and the tortoise. Many a brilliant and winning youth whom he had looked at with envy in the old days, when even the first rung of the ladder had seemed far beyond him, had dropped out of the race, disappeared; and he would keep what he had won: since he had won it so hard, he was bound to keep it. His pretty Cecilia! He was not a man to belittle family ties, but he was not insensible to the difference between Cecilia and the Patrick Graces. He felt a movement of opposition in him to his mother’s will which had always striven to hold Cecilia for the Graces and against her mother’s family. He was a good son; but his mother’s acrid criticism of the Dromores had sometimes

irked him, even while he bore with it because she had always been tender to Ciss.

Ciss clapped her hands softly together like a quiet, gleeful child.

“Then we shall take our holiday together,” she said, “and Cecilia will go to the House of Dromore. I am so glad that Cecilia will know her mother’s people.”

## CHAPTER VII

### THE PATRICK GRACES

THERE was a struggle of wills between old Mrs. Grace and her son when it was made known that Cecilia was to spend her summer holidays with her mother's people.

“Small good that will do her,” the old woman said, “to be taken up by people who look down on her father, and will drop her as soon as they've got tired of her. Poor lamb! it would be a pity if the fine folk were to win her poor heart and break it.”

“There is no fear of that,” Maurice Grace answered. “Cecilia is not a fool; and after all she belongs to them as much as she belongs to us. As for looking down on me, it would not matter if they did, so long as I have not deserved to be looked down upon. But I do not think they do. Lady Dromore, after the first, was my friend.”

This came at the end of a long struggle, in which the man had said very little and the old woman had said a good deal. Now she looked

at him, narrowing her eyes, and said the thing that went home like an arrow.

"It might be that they'd come after Ciss again, and that you'd lose Ciss and Cecilia both. Ciss is not as she was."

He flinched before the words, but he turned his back as though the matter were concluded; and the mother went away in high dudgeon, for the first time in her life at variance with her well-beloved and dutiful son.

Lady Dromore had written with all the old affectionateness to Ciss. They were prepared to welcome Cecilia with open arms. She had missed Ciss all these years. Not a word as to why her intercourse with Ciss had terminated. Only the old tenderness lived in every line of the letter.

Cecilia and Ciss, both with a sensitive dislike of anything like bad blood, strove to propitiate Gran, and found the old woman grimly unresponsive to their advances. With the illogicality of her kind she blamed the Dromores for the quarrel between her and her son. Not Ciss and Cecilia, who were always her lambs, but the proud, fine relations to whom she and hers were as dirt under their feet. She could remember still, with a grim amusement in the resentment, the manner in which Lady Dromore had received Mrs. Patrick Grace's advances on the last occasion when she and Lady Dromore had

come face to face. Possibly she had forgotten some other incidents of that meeting.

With an intention of propitiating Gran, Ciss and Cecilia both accepted an invitation to have tea with Mrs. Patrick Grace the day after Cecilia came home from the convent.

The Patrick Graces house was quite remarkably well-appointed. A comfortable wagonette, driven by Bernard Grace, met them at the station. If the day had been cold or wet there would have been a brougham, driven by a coachman, who—and the same was true of his equipage—was only different from the carriages and coachmen of the gentry in being a trifle smarter. Indeed, occasionally the carriages of the gentry and even of titled people in those parts were shameless old shandrydans. Patrick Grace had got bargains both of his wagonette and his brougham, and he dearly loved a bargain; but if he had not, he would have paid the price to ensure their being good. The house was a good one, too. It was said that Patrick Grace did a little money-lending on the sly, and often got his bargains in lieu of interest. And no one could deny that Bernard Grace drove well. In his own opinion and that of his immediate circle he did most things well.

Patrick Grace had not risen to sending his son to England to acquire the accent as so many of his friends had done, and that was

something for which his son owed him a grudge. For he detested his rich brogue, which was as much a part of him as his eyes and his hair.

The house was a modern one, which would have been comfortable-looking if it were not for the excrescences of bow windows and glass porches and green-houses which were dotted all over it. The parterres in front were set out very gayly, with scarlet geranium and blue lobelias clustered about standard rose trees.

The Minnie and Fan of long ago had now left the parental mansion as the brides, respectively, of a pushing young solicitor with a genius for getting himself appointed to all manner of jobs, and a publican in a large way of business in Dublin, who lived in one of the squares and entertained other publicans and their families lavishly.

There were two younger sisters home from the convent school which was not Cecilia's. Teresa and Eileen were inoffensive little school-girls so far, in their white muslin frocks and their hair tied with blue ribbon hanging down their backs.

They claimed Cousin Cecilia effusively and carried her off, and she did not at all object to being so claimed and carried off. Bernard had shown a horrible disposition to sit in Cecilia's pocket, which frightened her dreadfully. She was very glad to escape to those lit-

tle rooms upstairs with their innocent white beds and white suites of furniture, where were a good many girlish gimcracks, but not a sign of a book, or a picture, unless the photographs of Teresa's and Eileen's school-fellows might count as pictures.

The little girls had a school friend staying with them, a large eyed, delicate looking girl, with pale silken hair tied in a long plait, whose name was Irene Tollemache. Teresa and Eileen apparently derived much satisfaction from this aristocratic appellation. They confided to Cecilia that Irene was English and a niece of the Reverend Mother, and that she was being trained to earn her living as a governess.

Irene attracted Cecilia. There was something about her delicate little face, redeemed from plainness only by the beautiful gray eyes under fine dark lashes and delicate brows, that appealed to Cecilia. Here was a sensitive thing like herself, oddly placed at this moment among the unsensitive Graces.

It pleased Teresa and Eileen to display Cecilia to Irene, and to see that Cecilia liked their friend.

“We guessed you two would chum up,” said Teresa, with school-girl slanginess, “didn’t we, Eily? You’re both the same sort—fond of music and books and all that sort of rot. I’m

never going to open a book or a piano after I leave school."

"Nor I," said Eileen. "Mother de Pazzi nearly cries over me at my music lessons. She says I lacerate her ears. I know she lacerates my knuckles whacking them with her pointer. I hear her muttering to herself sometimes, in her horrid German voice, 'Ach, the stupid parents of the stupid pig children that will have the music for them! They had better make the butter or feed the animals than to strum-strum the piano!' Mother would be finely annoyed if she knew about it! And father paying so much for our education, too!"

"Mother de Pazzi is very kind," said Irene, in the refined voice which was in such striking contrast to the flat accents of Teresa and Eileen. "She is very kind, though she is so impatient of teaching those who do not love music. You know how good she always was to you when you had a bilious attack, Eily."

Downstairs Mrs. Patrick Grace was discussing Irene with Ciss.

"She's an ugly little thing, with that pasty face, and all eyes, isn't she?" she said complacently. "Now, my girls have all complexions and figures; I make them have figures—till they're married, at least. They can do what they like afterwards. Teresa and Eily will be finished next year. As soon as ever they come

home, in they go to eighteen-inch stays. They hate it at first, but I tell them it's for their good. You should see how Fan has spread since her marriage. And Minnie not far behind her. I tell them they'll be like feather-beds tied in the middle by the time they're thirty. But as Fan says, Michael can't go back on her now. Fan lives in a dressing-gown from morning till night."

"She has an interesting little face," said Ciss, not thinking of Fan.

"Who?" exclaimed Mrs. Patrick Grace. "Not Fan. Why, Fan has four chins and is making another."

"That child, Miss Tollemache."

"I think she's as ugly as sin, myself," said Mrs. Patrick, frankly. "So does Bernard. If she wasn't, I wouldn't have her here at any price. What do I care about Reverend Mother? Bernard's a terrible one for making love to every girl he claps eyes on. He couldn't sit beside a girl at the table without holding her hand under the cloth, or pressing her foot with his. I daresay you'll see Cecilia give a jump as soon as ever tea begins. I wouldn't have any girl without money staying in the house unless she was as ugly as sin; for Bernard would be getting her behind doors and kissing her and turning her head."

Ciss listened with that air of aloofness, as

though she did not belong to the place and might at any moment take flight, which she wore when with Mrs. Patrick Grace and her kind.

“Miss Tollemache looks very refined,” she said, in her far-away voice. “She looks as though she came of a good family.”

“The family’s well enough. The father is a parson that turned Catholic and so lost his way of living. Why couldn’t he stay as he was—till he was dying at least? I don’t think much of any one that can’t do better for their family than to have them turn out in the world to be governesses. Fan has got an English governess for her children. The last was a German. She very nearly spoiled their accents.”

Ciss’s face at the thought of Mrs. Michael Mulcahy’s offspring with spoiled accents was a study. One of the signs that Ciss had been growing different of late was that an odd, delightful appreciation of a humorous situation had suddenly developed in her.

“Fan would like them to have an English accent?” she said politely.

“Of course. This girl’s London, so it’s all right. She does all sorts of things for Fan. Fan’s getting so stout that she can hardly do anything for herself. Like myself, she doesn’t

believe in paying people for waiting on you and then doing it yourself. This girl, Miss Colville, pours out tea for Fan, and plays dance-music till her fingers are ready to drop off her, and never expects to be introduced to any one. Now, Minnie had a governess who actually said 'Good morning' to Larry the first time he passed her on the stairs. And Larry not a one to put her in her place, either. Poor Min was awfully annoyed about it."

The conversation was interrupted by the announcement of tea, followed by the entrance of Patrick Grace, who had just come in from a visit to a distant farm. Mr. Grace had had great good fortune during his life, for being a man of affairs it had happened to him to be entrusted with the management of a good many farms belonging to widows and orphans and such helpless people as could not be trusted to look after their own affairs. By one or other curious circumstances, Patrick Grace had invariably happened to find the business or the farms of these helpless owners in his own possession with the former owners gone to America, or dead, or otherwise removed to a safe distance. Of late years, while Mr. Grace's banking account had waxed fat, his popularity as a trustee had diminished.

He looked with much complacency around

the room as he entered. The furnishing had been his own choice. There were a good many mirrors, a good many squab chairs and sofas of plush and blue satin, a good deal of gilding. It pleased Patrick Grace's taste.

"Have you shown her the billiard-room?" he asked his wife, as soon as he had shaken hands with Ciss. "Our latest improvement, hey? I little thought, Cousin Cecilia, when I was a ragged boy, picking stones on the land I now own—it belonged to the O'Rourkes then; they're all beggared out of it long ago and in America—that I'd ever put J. P. to my name and own a house that's not a house but a mansion—not a house but a mansion."

The table set for that curious meal called high tea groaned under all manner of good things. Mrs. Patrick presided over the tea-tray at one end, and the china and silver were excellent of their kind. There were cakes in number and variety to feed an army, sandwiches, bread and butter, and solid joints as well; roast beef, cold ham, chicken, lobster salad, boiled eggs, to say nothing of sardines and potted meats, and even a dish of grilled chops brought in at the last moment. There was nothing to drink on the table except tea. That was a rule Bernard Grace fretted against, while he acknowledged the necessity for it—since Patrick Grace spent his life between

periods of tea-drinking and wild bouts of whiskey-drinking when nothing and nobody was safe with him.

Bernard came into the room with a smiling, all-conquering air. He was wearing riding-breeches and a short coat, which he thought represented adequately the country gentleman's costume. He had aspirations after being a sort of squire.

He frowned when he saw Cecilia safely ensconced between her mother and Miss Tollemache.

"Oh, come, come," he said, "all you ladies can't sit together. What do you think of me? I'm not going to sit between my little sisters, I assure you."

Irene Tollemache blushed and Teresa and Eileen giggled. They had a tremendous admiration for Bernard.

But Ciss and Cecilia were not to be dislodged, and there was no special gain in getting Irene Tollemache to move since Ciss sat by her, Cecilia on Ciss's other hand having entered into conversation with Patrick Grace hurriedly and with a fluency foreign to her.

"Sit down, Barney, sit down," said Patrick Grace, jocosely. "Can't the old men have their chance? And isn't your head turned from having your name in all the papers,

Cecilia? I remember when I thought it a fine thing myself, before I got used to it."

Bernard, with a sulky pleasantry about being able to see the ladies to better advantage, subsided into the chair between Teresa and Eileen, and having pulled their hair hard by way of an affectionate demonstration, set himself to an impartial ogling of the other side of the table which might be intended for Cecilia or for Irene Tollemache. It made both girls equally uncomfortable, though in a different way, which was the very thing Bernard desired as a tribute to his powers of fascination.

"Maybe you'll give us a specimen of your powers after tea," said Patrick Grace, meaning to be very civil to Cecilia. "There's a piano deserves to be played on. It's worth a hundred pounds—a hundred pounds, mind you. I got a bargain of it, but that's neither here nor there. And those hussies there," playfully indicating his daughters, "never give us a tune on it, though I pay through the nose to have them taught the pianofort-ee. 'Play us a bit o' Wagner,' I said to Tess the other night. He pronounced it Waggoner. 'Ah, go on out o' that,' said she. 'I can't play Waggoner. Would you like a bit from *Floradora*?' And I didn't get it, either." He reached to pinch Teresa's rosy ear. "Neither Waggoner nor *Floradora*. Yet they have had advan-

tages their poor pa never dreamed of when he was their age."

"Don't expect too much from them," said Mrs. Patrick, indulgently. "It isn't as though they had to earn their bread."

Cecilia glanced in a shocked way towards Irene Tollemache. She had always a sensitive dread of hurting any one. Irene had plainly heard nothing of the conversation. She was sitting quite flushed and happy-looking, crumbling her bread, occasionally glancing shyly at Bernard and looking away as though his yellow eyes dazzled her.



## CHAPTER VIII

### A RAILWAY JOURNEY

CECILIA had managed to keep off Bernard's unwelcome attentions till nearly the end of the visit. She was shocked in a chilly, innocent way at the discovery she had made about Irene Tollemache. That a girl who was a lady should be fascinated by Bernard Grace! Cecilia supposed he had good looks—of a sort. To her the looks were repellent. She shuddered in her childish way at the thought of Bernard's brown and yellow eyes, his red lips, his big moustache and white teeth, his full, handsome features. There was no justification for Irene, she said to herself. What though she was only eighteen! Then she ought to have been more fastidious. Cecilia was nearly nineteen; but she had disliked Bernard just as much when she had been sixteen and fifteen and fourteen.

She remembered once when he had lifted her in his arms to carry her across a stream. She was sixteen then; and she had loathed Bernard because he had put his arms about her and held her closer than even the occasion war-

ranted. She had struggled with him till he had put her down panting at the other side of the stream. Then she had run home to Gran, sobbing all the way, and Gran had soothed her, although above the child's bent head her old lips had worn a queer smile, and she had scolded Bernard about it. Bernard had always been a trial to Cecilia—always, with his air of covert love-making. How on earth could Irene feel differently from what she, Cecilia, did?

Mrs. Patrick had schemed to get Bernard and Cecilia alone, and had been frustrated by her husband, to whom his heir-apparent was not always *persona grata*. Patrick Grace had kept Cecilia at the piano singing for him till it was nearly time for the train. He was pleased that Cecilia was so eager to please him.

“Ha, ha! my fine fellow!” he said to his son, mocking him. “It isn’t always the young cocks that are the best crowers.”

Bernard had driven them to the little country station. He had found some one to hold his horse and had accompanied them on to the platform where he had walked up and down beside them, whispering to Cecilia. It was one of the things that showed Bernard’s “bad form” that he treated Ciss as a negligible person. He was pleased that the railway porter, who touched his cap to him, and the station master,

and the few humble folk who were seeing their friends off by train, and one or two others of a higher class, should see him on terms of obvious intimacy with such a beautiful girl as Cecilia, and her no less beautiful mother, with her strange air of distinction. He wished now that he had not repulsed Teresa and Eileen, when they had wanted to drive to the station. He might have bribed them to keep Ciss occupied while he talked to Cecilia.

The little train steamed in. It was a local train and contained few passengers. Ciss and Cecilia had a carriage to themselves. Bernard Grace got in and sat with them while the train was getting some one's luggage aboard in the usual leisurely Irish fashion, which allows time for much discussion of all manner of subjects.

At the last, when the whistle sounded, before Cecilia was aware of his design, he had stooped and kissed her neck, just by the ear, with a light laugh which had a note of anger in it. He had sprung out on the platform while the train moved from it.

Ciss had been as indignant as Cecilia. At first two red spots had come into her cheeks like flames blown by the wind. Bitter things had been upon her tongue. She had said them with closed lips. Then her loyalty to her husband had come uppermost.

"Never mind, Cecilia," she said. "After all,

he is your father's kinsman. I don't know how he can be, but he is. Let us forget him for papa's sake."

And now Thursday morning had come and Ciss and Cecilia were at the Kingsbridge, with Nannie D'Arcy in attendance. At the last moment Maurice Grace had been prevented from coming to see his daughter off; but surely it was a simple enough matter to be managed by three women. They had but to seize a porter and let him look after them and the luggage.

But the three women were babes in the wood. Even Nannie's sound common-sense in the matters of her everyday life forsook her before the bustle and noise of the departure platform. There was a large detachment of troops going by the train. They seemed to fill the platform from end to end; they were hanging from all the carriage windows. A porter had seized Cecilia's luggage as soon as the cab had pulled up at the Kingsbridge. He had rushed off with it shouting something or other back at them. Ciss, hurrying after him, had forgotten to pay the cab. In returning to repair the omission the porter and the luggage were lost sight of altogether.

A jostling crowd was about the booking-office, hiding its whereabouts from them. They wandered on to the platform and some

one directed them back to the booking-office. They stood at the extreme edge of the jostling, good-natured crowd. The big station clock pointed to eight minutes to the hour. The train left at the hour.

A voice spoke at Ciss's elbow, and she turned about quickly. For once she was glad to see Bernard Grace and forbore to resent his coming to see Cecilia off. What a difference it made when there was a man! How simple it was, after all!

He put them aside out of the path of the crowd, and the trolleys laden with luggage, which had already run down the bewildered women half a dozen times. He got Cecilia's ticket in a few seconds. He shouldered a way for them through the crowd. He found a carriage with a vacant corner seat for Cecilia. At the other end of the carriage a couple of nuns were telling their beads.

He inducted Cecilia in her corner-seat and put her light luggage in the rack above her head, scattering a few articles in the seat opposite to her so that it might remain vacant.

Then he darted off to the bookstall to get her some papers.

"He is really very kind," said Ciss, with a deprecating look at Cecilia.

"Yes . . . ." said Cecilia, with slow unwillingness.

She wished it had been any one but Bernard who had been of service to them. He had such an intolerable way of behaving as though he owned her. That familiarity of Bernard's, detested since childhood, had become more intolerable of late.

The carriage door was open, and she was leaning forward to talk to her mother. It was a stormy, wet morning, the beautiful weather having broken up suddenly. It was raining in torrents now on the glass roof of the station, darkening the platform below and the faces of the passers-by. The inside of the carriages was in almost impenetrable gloom. From such a background Cecilia's face, like the face of a young angel, made many a one turn to look and look again.

Suddenly Ciss, who had her back to the platform, was aware of a startled light and color in Cecilia's face. She turned about. Lord Kilrush was lifting his hat to Cecilia.

He came forward eagerly and shook hands with them, looking from mother to daughter with an air of frank pleasure.

"Are you traveling by this train?" he asked. "How lucky! May I come in?"

"I am not going," said Ciss. "My daughter is going to stay with the Dromores."

"So am I. How fortunate for me! You

will let me look after Miss Grace, as we are both bound for the same place? I say—the train *is* late. I should hardly have caught it if it had been in time. Look here”—to a passing porter—“why is the train so late?”

“Mails for the south not in yet, sir. If they aren’t in soon, yez’ll have to start without them, and wait at Maryboro’ for a special engine to ketch yez up.”

Lord Kilrush took the seat opposite Cecilia’s, the seat which had been so cunningly reserved by Bernard Grace. Ah, there was Bernard coming back, with some picture papers and a couple of sixpenny novels! He leaned half-way into the carriage.

“Here you are!” he said. “*Tit Bits, Lady’s Pictorial, Family Herald*, and a couple of Corelli’s. I hope you think I’ve done well, Cecilia.”

He put them on her knee, and stood holding them there with his insufferable air of familiarity. Cecilia’s eyes drooped, and a painful wave of color flooded the pure oval of her face.

“I’ve a great mind to come with you as far as Kildare,” said Bernard, gloating over the sudden red. “I’d think nothing of doing it. Only”—his voice fell to a whisper—“it wouldn’t be the same thing with other people

in the carriage. The train's crowded. I wonder if I could find the guard? He might get us an empty carriage."

Cecilia leaned away from him with such obvious shrinking that it aroused her fellow-traveler to interfere. The sight of Bernard's face so close to Cecilia's filled him with an odd rage.

"Excuse me, sir," he said glacially. "You are interfering with this lady who wishes to speak to her daughter."

It was true that Bernard had pushed Ciss to one side with scant courtesy. He had been brought up to think of Ciss as "dotty," and that did not constitute a special claim to his courtesy as it might have done with a finer nature.

"The young lady is my cousin," said Bernard, turning a fierce, suspicious glance on the other passenger, in whom he recognized, and the recognition fanned the flame of his anger, some one of another world than his.

"Nevertheless you are incommodeing Mrs. Grace," Kilrush said coldly.

Even the quiet nuns were distracted from their prayers to watch the little human drama that was being enacted at the other end of the carriage.

Bernard snorted, panted, and made up his mind.

“I am coming with you all the way, Cousin Cecilia,” he said. “It is my duty to protect you from objectionable companions.”

The train whistled and began to move. Bernard was half-in, half-out of the carriage. Suddenly Cecilia, terrified at the prospect of his company, put out her two hands and pushed him with all her might. Kilrush made as if he would help her; but there was no need for his help. Bernard staggered back, and was caught in the arms of a convenient porter. They were free of him.

The nuns smiled at each other in their corners. They were not Irishwomen for nothing.

As for Kilrush—Kilrush had been furious at first because Cecilia had blushed for the bounder. He knew something of Ciss’s odd story. But he had not imagined Cecilia having such a kinsman. Anyhow, it was pretty certain that his attentions were forced upon her.

He caught sight of the demure, merry-eyed nun smiling at her companion, and the smile exhilarated him, put him into good humor. He tried to distract Cecilia, talking to her of other things easily, behaving as though the incident had not occurred. The only sign he showed was that he brushed away the bundle of papers and the two Corellis as though he

would not have them touch Cecilia's skirt, as though Bernard had contaminated his foolish choice. The action made Cecilia blush again, consciously.

At Kildare, where the train waited a few minutes, he left the carriage and came back presently carrying a bag, a luncheon-basket, a rug and some magazines. He had reclaimed them from the first-class carriage where he had left them, because Cecilia was traveling second-class.

He put down the things, and, unfolding the rug, spread it over her knees. It was not unwelcome, although the day was July's. The damp had seized on everything, making the atmosphere cold and chilly. It might have been an October storm for the wind that howled about the train, and drove leaves and twigs with the rain against the carriage window.

"Whenever you like we will have lunch," he said.

"I have some sandwiches and a bottle of milk," said Cecilia.

"I adore sandwiches and milk," he said gravely. "I have a cold chicken, some slices of tongue, a salad, rolls and butter, and a bottle of champagne. Let us share and share alike, won't you?"

"I am not hungry yet," Cecilia confessed.

“When you are, let me know. Meanwhile, here are some things for you to read.”

He swept Bernard’s bundle further away, and held out the items of his own collection under her eyes—*Cornhill*, *The Fortnightly*, *The Spectator*, *Blackwood*, a couple of London evening papers, and the Dublin morning papers. Opening his bag, he took out a couple of volumes. One was “Rhoda Fleming,” the other a volume of Francis Thompson’s poems. He watched with some curiosity to see what she would select.

She did not glance at the newspapers. Her hand hovered uncertainly over the two books, then pounced on Francis Thompson.

“I have read a poem of his called ‘The Hound of Heaven,’ ” she said. “I thought it was wonderful, and I have always wanted to read more.”

His face brightened.

“With that choice,” he said, “what a world you have before you! You must read Meredith, too, one day.”

Immersed in his papers to all appearance—he was a young man who took a profound interest in the history of his own time—he glanced now and again at her face, over which the emotions of the poetry passed like sunshine and cloud-shadow over a golden field. He was so glad she had chosen Francis Thompson.

The heavenly face ought to have a heavenly mind. And he was oddly relieved that Ciss's daughter should have imagination and intellect.

At Maryboro' they were held up, waiting for the mails. By this time Cecilia was quite ready for lunch; but when Kilrush suggested it, she glanced shyly towards the nuns, who were now engaged in reading each a little cloth-covered book.

He had thought of that. They were questing nuns, Little Sisters of the Poor. He spoke to a porter. In a few minutes a basket came with a simple luncheon of tea and bread-and-butter and boiled eggs.

"The Sisters will permit me," he said, with his charming smile.

The nuns colored, smiled, and murmuring their gratitude, fell to on the simple meal.

"It would be no use offering them luxuries," he said in a whisper as he divided the chicken, giving the daintiest portions to Cecilia.

He thought he had never enjoyed a meal so much. The rain streamed against the carriage windows, and the wind seemed as though it would lift the train and shake it as a terrier shakes a rat. The atmosphere was cold and clammy, and the carriage comfortless enough. But Cecilia's face was a delight; and it was a delight to see in so ethereal-looking a creature the healthy school-girl appetite that belied her

appearance. Cecilia had never tasted champagne, and it made him laugh to see the half-fearful way in which she held her glass to be filled by the foaming, honey-colored stream.

The nuns, too, plainly enjoyed their little repast.

“Monsieur is very kind,” said the blue-eyed one, having put away tidily the remains of the tea-basket and brought it to Kilrush’s side. “We shall pray for Monsieur.”

What matter though the wind shrieked and the rain fell, and they were held up over an hour at Maryboro’ station waiting for the mails? Kilrush laughed at the mishap. He laughed again when a fallen tree straight across the line brought the train to a standstill. For himself he hardly cared if the journey were to go on for ever.

The nuns left them at Limerick Junction, and from that time till they reached Mallow their intimacy seemed to grow from minute to minute. Mallow came all too soon. At Mallow they had to change. But there was no train awaiting them. The train which should have made the connection had grown tired of waiting and was gone.

“The devil a train there is now,” said the friendly porter, “till ten o’clock to-night. If I was your Honor I’d be goin’ up to the hotel an’ orderin’ my dinner. If it wasn’t too wet

yez might be takin' a stroll about the place. Listen to the wind bellowin'. You'd think it 'ud lift the station, so ye would. They'll be goin' mad about their lettters in Cork, so they will."

Kilrush concealed the consternation he felt. "How fortunate," he said, "that I happened to be in charge of you, Miss Grace."

And Cecilia, knowing no cause for consternation, felt devoutly thankful to be in his care and protection.

## CHAPTER IX

### CECILY'S DAUGHTER

THEY were just finishing tea at the Railway Hotel, and congratulating themselves that the train had stopped and the skies were breaking up magnificently, when the same friendly porter called to them unceremoniously through the open window.

“Yez are in the greatest o’ luck,” he said, “for an excursion’s just come in from Cork—’tis the first we heard of it—and it’ll carry yez on to Killarney. I’ve tould the guard yez are comin’, so yez needn’t be in a hurry.”

“There’s no accounting for the ways of Irish railways, even main-line railways,” Kilrush said laughing, as the man departed.

Sure enough when they reached the platform after a run which seemed to make a new step forward in their intimacy, a long train was puffing and panting by the platform, and the friendly porter was holding a carriage-door open.

“There’s no time to telegraph to Lady Dromore again,” Kilrush said as he handed her into her carriage. “I suppose we shall be able

to get something at Killarney. The House of Dromore is ten miles from Killarney. We shall be late for dinner, but it will be better than arriving in the small hours of the morning as we must have done by the later train; and we shall arrive in time to prevent the carriage being sent."

There was a deep relief in his voice, for the reason of which Cecilia had no comprehension.

They had only two fellow-passengers, a couple verging towards middle-life, plainly husband and wife, and much attached to each other. The lady was lying down on one of the seats when they got into the carriage; but after a time as they were passing through glorious mountain scenery her husband helped her to sit up so that she might look from the windows, propping her about comfortably with rugs and pillows.

Kilrush and Cecilia sat opposite to each other and gazed out at the purple mountains, dark-purple like a pansy against a sky of shining and scattered rose-leaves. It was a magnificent evening. Far off the lakes and inlets of Kerry burned rosy in the rosy sunset. The whole world seemed purple and rose. All the bog water reflected the miraculous sky, a curlew as he sped above the bog caught the rose-light on his head and wings.

The colors of the sunset were in Cecilia's eyes, making them burn as though with a somber and tragic passion. Kilrush sat in the shadow with his back to the engine watching her with delight. Her ingenuous face showed every emotion she was feeling. It kept lighting brighter and ever brighter like the West. Once her eyes widened and darkened. Her lips parted.

"What is it?" he asked, and moved to her side to see the better.

It was a sudden rainbow making a magnificent lunette, the arch of it high in heaven, the foundations disappearing, the one into a sheet of bog-water, the other into the heather of the hillside. Where the radiance ended it hung shimmering and broken, like wonderful gossamer, for some way down the hillside.

The sun came out suddenly and turned all the far-away inland seas to golden water. The rain-drops hung on the leaves of the trees like a fine fringe of gold.

Kilrush resumed his seat where he could the better watch Cecilia's face. She was wrapped in the spectacle of beauty through which they were passing; so wrapped and lost that she had forgotten him.

He watched her out of his dark corner, and his face was an unconscious betrayal. The

married lovers at the other end of the carriage looked at him, and then smiled into each other's eyes.

And now they were in the shadow of mountains dark as the Little Black Rose herself, and the distant glories were hidden from them. And presently the train, which had been gratefully slow in traveling, creaked and groaned its way into Killarney Railway Station.

The train disgorged a great number of excursionists, many of them Americans bent on doing Killarney, and leaving it behind them by lunch-time next day. They were clambering on the long line of outside cars and into the hotel 'buses. But Kilrush, before the train stopped, had selected his man and his horse, and had taken possession of the car before a second man could bear down upon it.

Cecilia never forgot the exhilaration of that drive. The little horse went like the wind, and the crazy car rocked from side to side; but Cecilia knew too much of the ways of outside cars to be easily dislodged, and she enjoyed the rapid motion, the soft air, the beautiful scenery, the back view of the ragged driver, and last, but not least, Kilrush's voice so near her ear as he leaned across the car that his breath was on her cheek. It seemed years since the morning, so intimate had they become. Kilrush jested, and was encouraged by Cecilia's laughter, and

the quick, happy understanding of her face. She had a sense of humor, most happily. There was something incongruous about it when her cheek dimpled as though a serious young angel jested. It was like the sudden, fresh gaiety of a delightful child.

It was nine o'clock when they pulled up at the lodge gates of the House of Dromore, through which the lumbering old carriage was just coming on its way to meet them. They were unexpected, of course, and the family was still at the dinner-table. The old butler, who looked curiously at Cecilia, because he had not forgotten Ciss, led the way upstairs to the drawing-room. There was a wide flight of stairs softly carpeted; on either side a gallery running round a central hall with many doors opening from it. Between the doors were hung many dim oil-paintings, ladies and gentlemen in the dress of long ago, dim for the greater part except where a high light looked out of the mellow darkness.

Cecilia's feet seemed to sink in the soft carpet. The convent had been beautiful after a fashion, but austere; no carpets or such luxuries, but polished floors on which the unwary slipped. One of the doors stood open, and there was a glint of firelight on tooled and gilt bindings behind a lattice of brasswork. The servant opened a door beyond and ush-

ered them into a long drawing-room, with a fire of peat burning at either end.

"I will let her ladyship know," he said, leaving them.

Cecilia sat down on a low chair within a great screen of Spanish leather. Through the long windows which stood open she could see the sky lemon-yellow above the hills, with a single star quivering upon its background. She had a feeling as though she had known it all before, as though she were Ciss and not Cecilia, come back to her own people.

There seemed acres of distance between her and the fire at the other end of the room—a perfect continent of shabby carpet dotted here and there with islets of little tables and chairs and sofas. There was a soft light of shaded lamps in the room. It was all beautiful and dim and faded. Cecilia guessed that everything would be a bit shabby by daylight. She was a little frightened of her first meeting with mamma's people, her own people, the inhabitants of this strange, new, wonderful world, which yet had a familiarity to her eyes as though she had known it all in another life.

Kilrush, watching her with his back to the fire, caught a sudden dimple in her cheek. She was comparing it with Patrick Grace's "mansion," where all was so brand-new and bright and staring. He wondered what had caused

that dimple; and he looked down at her as though she was very pleasant in his sight. Then the door opened and Lady Dromore came in.

She uttered a little cry when she saw Cecilia, and came to her with a quick, graceful movement. She was one of the women who are young and old, but never middle-aged, and she had still the slenderness of youth, and the air of youth, although there might be gray in her hair and a few lines in her face. But it would be cruel to think of her as middle-aged.

“Ciss’s daughter!” she said, holding Cecilia’s hands and looking into her eyes. “My dear Ciss’s daughter!”

There were tears in her eyes as she kissed Cecilia with the utmost tenderness.

They were standing in a group on the hearth-rug, Kilrush explaining the mishap to the train, when Betty came running in, and after her, more shyly and sedately, two other girls, a tall young man in evening dress, and a boy in an Eton suit, all eager to welcome Cecilia. They had all the curious air of excessive refinement which belonged to their mother, all charming and gracious and distinguished, the beautiful, golden-haired, dreamy-eyed children grown up and as beautiful as of old. As it happened, they were all at home except Brian, who was with his ship. Dermot, the soldier,

had a bronze hue over his fairness, and brave, frank, gray eyes. Guy, the Eton boy, had a man-of-the-world air as he shook hands with Cecilia and then stood surveying her, that made her smile to herself. Oona and Sheila were both fair beauties.

“All fair and golden is my Queen in the Castle of Dromore,” runs the old song, and the tradition that the women of the Dromores were fair and gentle lasted till this day.

Then, somewhat to Cecilia’s relief, Betty took possession of her and carried her off upstairs to a little room within her own, very pretty and pleasant, with hangings of gay colored chintz and a little canopied bed in the corner, and a sofa drawn before a cheerful fire; for, as Betty explained, it was so damp in those regions that a fire was pleasant every night of the year.

Some one had brought up Cecilia’s luggage and had left it in the middle of the floor, and now a maid knocked at the door and asked if she might unpack for Miss Grace.

“You can come back in half an hour, Doyle,” Betty said. “I am going to look after my cousin myself for the present.”

The maid disappeared, and came back a minute later with a little tray on which were a teacup, a little teapot, cream, sugar, and a plate of thin bread and butter. She put the

tray on a table by Cecilia's elbow, and disappearing again, came back with hot water and an armful of towels.

"You have half an hour to drink your tea and change," said Betty, "before your dinner is ready. But if you are late no one will scold you. I thought you would like a cup of tea better than anything. If you feel a bath would refresh you, there is a bathroom next door, and meantime I can be getting out your things."

It was the sweetest and warmest and most homely of welcomes. Cecilia had her bath, and Betty undid the multiplicity of her cousin's tight school-girl plaits, exclaiming as she did so at the length and thickness of Cecilia's hair, and having brushed it, put it on the top of her head in a great golden mass, which did justice to the ripples and curls that were hitherto screwed away so tightly. A whole maze of bewildering prettiness came out about Cecilia's ears and temples and at the nape of her neck, taking away the somewhat prim and severe look she had worn.

Betty selected Cecilia's frock, a half-loose garment of the true Madonna blue, with hanging sleeves and a fichu of white, and helped her into it, and put on her shoes and clasped her necklace, all the time caressing Cecilia with tender words and touches that riveted more and more strongly Betty's chains on Cecilia's heart,

which had an immense capacity for answering love with love.

It was a new Cecilia whom Betty led down the broad stairs and into the drawing-room. Catching sight of herself in a mirror as she passed Cecilia hardly knew herself. Hitherto she had worn school-girl frocks of a naked simplicity. She had wondered and been delighted over the garments her mother had bought for this visit to the Dromores; but they had come on her so suddenly that she had been bewildered about them. She had stood motionless, and turned about as she was directed while the dressmakers fitted her for her bodices and her skirts. The things had all been packed for her by Ciss herself, with the soft paper in their folds, and Cecilia had not yet grown used to the variety and multiplicity of her garments. She could hardly recognize herself in the new Cecilia all in white and blue, the aureole of her hair waved like a young angel's.

Betty led the way straight to the dining-room, for the bell had rung as they came downstairs. Lord Kilrush was there before them.

"I am as hungry as a hunter," he said, looking at Cecilia as though she dazzled him.

"Shall I stay?" asked Betty, "or leave you two hungry ones together to enjoy your meal?"

"Stay, Bet," Lord Kilrush said, with an af-

fectionate familiarity; "but don't expect me to talk."

He did talk, however. It was a very gay little meal, and they sat over their coffee after the servants had left the room until Betty sprang up and reminded them that Cecilia's presence was much desired in the drawing-room, from which indeed a message was carried by Guy before they could leave the table.

There were some additions to the family group. Lord Dromore, his high, aristocratic features grown more fleshless, the hair thinner on his head, came forward to welcome Cecilia kindly. There was a young, lean, shy-looking gentleman who was introduced to Cecilia as Mr. L'Estrange. His pale eyes rested indifferently on Cecilia, and wandered on to Sheila at the piano, to which after a moment or two he betook himself with an absent-minded air.

Cecilia sat down in the center of the fireside group. Oona stood by her father with a hand through his arm in a proudly possessive way. Kilrush had sat down by Betty. Lady Dromore hovered uneasily between one and another, evidently still feeling the excitement of seeing Ciss's daughter.

A tall, dark gentleman came towards the group. He was very handsome, clean shaven, with dark, rather mournful eyes, and his black

hair lightly sprinkled with gray. When he spoke he had a deep, pleasant voice, and his expression for Cecilia was very kind.

“And so this is Ciss’s girl,” he said, taking Cecilia’s hand into his strong, firm grip.

“Sir Paul Chadwick was a great friend of your mother’s, Cecilia,” said Lady Dromore.

For a second or two Cecilia had a queer sense of being isolated with Sir Paul Chadwick—as though they two were alone and the group about the fire far away.

“Ciss’s daughter!” he repeated as though to himself.

Sheila at the piano broke into a great crashing war-march and the momentary tension was relieved. Then the butler was at the door calling out, “Mrs. Chapman,” and there came into the room a very old lady, very erect, with diamonds glittering in her point lace and velvet and in her snow-white hair—a very grand old lady indeed.

“And so this is Cecily’s daughter,” she said, when she could turn about from the enthusiastic welcome all, young and old, had given her. “Oh, I’m not so old yet but that I can come out after dinner to see Cecily’s daughter.”

How was it, Cecilia asked herself, that all those years the Dromores had held apart, when to them and their friends she was so dear and welcome as Cecily’s daughter?

## CHAPTER X

### GOLDEN DAYS

THE young life made the House of Dromore a gay and happy place that summer.

Cecilia wrote home passionate pæans on the Dromore family. Every one made much of her; every one was good to her; even the old servants and the tenants on the estate had their special kindness for Miss Cecily's daughter.

There were picnics, fishing expeditions, parties of one kind or another got up in her honor. The young, warm-hearted, gracious children of the house took her into their daily life and made her the center of it. Betty, the dominant one, asserted her right to Cecilia against her brothers and sisters and held it. Dermot and little Guy were both obviously in love with Cecilia. Lord Kilrush, too, seemed to have a prior, special claim. Mrs. Chapman, who was Lord Kilrush's aunt, used to sit and watch Cecilia with bright, meditative eyes. And Sir Paul Chadwick joined the young people at their gaieties more than of old.

The young people found that Cecilia's education was certainly deficient. She had not the

arts which came to them by nature. She could neither ride nor drive; she could not fish nor shoot; she had never dreamed of golfing, nor did she play hockey, although at the advanced convent-school a hockey team had been one of the innovations of Cecilia's last year. Of course her music was a great delight. The young Wynnes had not devoted themselves to music. Cecilia's dancing was a sight to see. And she was exquisitely clever with her needle.

“An indoor girl,” Lady Dromore described Cecilia, with an implied disparagement of her own charming brood, of whom she complained cheerfully that they only slept within doors.

The cousins set themselves joyfully to teaching Cecilia the things she ought to know. There was a little cob in the stable of the most angelic disposition, perfectly safe for a novice. Betty lent a skirt, and Cecilia was put up for her first riding-lesson by Dermot. At first she felt only a terrified certainty that she could never stick on. After a few days she did not quite give herself up for lost when Charlie broke into a mild trot. On the fourth day Lord Kilrush, who had been up in Dublin, where he had official duties, arrived on the scene during a riding-lesson, and to Dermot's intense indignation took the command of affairs.

"As though I could not be trusted to take care of you," said the young man indignantly. "Why shouldn't he mind his own business and look after Betty? He is only three years older than I am, after all; but he will never forget that I fagged for him at Eton."

Cecilia wondered why Lord Kilrush should be expected to look after Betty, who was an excellent horsewoman. He had a better way than Dermot, she acknowledged to herself, though not for worlds would she have said it to Dermot, and during the three or four days he remained he got his pupil on surprisingly well.

Then Guy must teach her the bicycle. It was really surprising how Cecilia's education had been neglected. Ciss had been old-fashioned in her ideas about her girl. She had never taken kindly to the idea of bicycling. So Cecilia had her lessons from Guy, in whose confidence she was about everything; Guy lavished gifts on Cecilia. It touched her when he presented her with the pick of the litter of Colleen's puppies. Colleen was a beautiful red setter, his own special property and the apple of his eye. When he spent his pocket-money on gifts of scent, of sweets and music for Cecilia, watching her lightest words as a guide to her wishes, Cecilia could have wept with passionate gratitude.

One day Sir Paul Chadwick gave them a bachelor lunch at which Betty presided, there being only the young people present. It was a delightful lunch, specially planned for girls, plenty of roses and fruit and sweets, and the substantial part of the meal of the most delicate, pink salmon in green, crisp lettuce, birds in aspic jelly, things that tasted deliciously and made a picture to look at.

Lord Kilrush was still in Dublin, and the host, after hovering for a while between Betty and Cecilia, finally left Cecilia to Dermot, making the young man perfectly happy by so doing.

The house was a fine old house, full of beautiful things, but with a chill and dusty air, as a house without a mistress is apt to be.

“I wonder why he never married!” Cecilia thought once or twice.

She wondered about it to Dermot as they wandered along an upper corridor. Sir Paul had bidden them explore the house from garret to basement as they would. From one of the bedrooms came shrieks of joy. Betty and her sisters were attiring themselves in some of the ancient garments which had belonged to Sir Paul’s grandmother and great-grandmother. Looking from an upper window over the lawn Cecilia could see Richard L’Estrange smok-

ing a cigar with his host, and now and again looking up at the open windows. For once Sheila had deserted him.

"I wonder why Sir Paul never married," said Cecilia.

Sir Paul, who had been leaning over the terrace balustrade, looked up at them and waved his hand.

"I hope he didn't hear," said Cecilia.

"Hardly—at that distance," Dermot returned. "As for his not marrying, it is a beastly shame he shouldn't have. The place goes to a cousin up in Dublin, if Sir Paul has no heirs. He's not a very nice person. It would be a very sad day for Arlo when Alec Chadwick came in Sir Paul's place."

"He might marry yet," Cecilia said, looking over the wonderful prospect below and thinking how sad it was that the place should pass to uncongenial ownership. "He might marry yet."

"He's rather old," Dermot objected. "Why, he can't be far off fifty. An awful age, isn't it?"

"He is very handsome," said Cecilia, dreamily. "Lots of girls would not mind his being nearly fifty. He doesn't seem at all old somehow."

The girls emerged from the bedrooms dressed in quaint finery, in which they looked

enchanting. Guy had discovered a beaver hat, tail-coat, and nankeen breeches of the forties, and strutted about in clothes much too big for him, aping the manner of Sir Hercules Chadwick, sometime M.P. for Cahirciveen.

And Cecilia forgot that she had not learned the reason why Sir Paul Chadwick had never married.

A little later she was walking with Sir Paul himself in the garden. Betty and Sheila had returned to the delightful task of turning out the old wardrobes and chests of drawers and cupboards. Dermot had joined the transparent Richard L'Estrange, whose countenance lightened in proportion as Sheila came near him; darkened as she retreated.

"I heard you ask your cousin why I had never married," Sir Paul said, quietly.

"Oh!" cried Cecilia, distressed. "I did not think you could hear."

"Just where we were standing we could hear everything. The house-wall seems to catch and throw back the sounds. Also, I heard you say that I was not too old for love and marriage. Kind child! To your age usually my age means hoary antediluvianism."

"Oh no, no!" cried Cecilia.

His eyes kindled under the narrowed lids.

"I am the faithful sort, Cecilia," he said. "I loved a woman when I was young; and

she married some one else. I have been faithful to her memory. That is all."

"She is dead?" asked Cecilia, in a low voice.

"No; she is living."

"It was not that she did not love you?"

There was something exquisitely flattering to the middle-aged man in the innocent words. If Cecilia had been the veriest flirt, she could not have pleased more subtly. And it was obvious that Cecilia had spoken in all simplicity. One had only to look at her face to know that.

"She loved me."

Cecilia waited a moment. Was he going to tell her more? She had a profound interest in the dead and gone romance, for she was attracted by Paul Chadwick's distinguished personality. After a second or two he spoke again.

"She loved me," he said, "yet she married another man joyfully. It is a mystery, is it not, little Cecilia? Never mind, dear. I was very unhappy once, but I am happy enough now. And that kind child, Cecilia, thinks that I might still be loved for myself. Is not that something to make me happy?"

He ended on a note of tender gaiety.

For a second or two Cecilia walked beside him in silence. Then she spoke—of something which had been puzzling her.

“Sir Paul,” she said, “you are an old friend of Lord and Lady Dromore?”

“Yes, Cecilia.”

“And Arlo has always been yours?”

“I was born to its inheritance; since my father died before I was born.”

He wondered what was coming.

“Then you must have known mamma?”

“Yes, I knew her. I knew her from the time she was sent home from India a little orphaned child. She was the sweetest thing the world contained—till now.”

“Then, why, tell me, Sir Paul, why does every one talk of mamma as though she were dead? Every one is so glad to see mamma’s daughter, gentle and simple alike. Yet there is never any suggestion that mamma might come back. They all love her so much; a few hours’ journey would bring her here; yet no one ever seems to think of that. And Lady Dromore, who wept over me because I was so like mamma, has not seen her for years. Why, Sir Paul?”

He did not answer. He did not know how to answer. Indeed, he was grateful for the diversion created by the sudden appearance of Mrs. Chapman, accompanied by Lord Kilrush. The old lady glanced at her nephew’s face, then at Cecilia’s, where agitation had left its traces.

“I have brought Kilrush, Paul,” she said. “I happened to call at the House of Dromore and found every one out, and poor Kilrush just arrived and very sure of his welcome. Kilrush has a whole week of freedom before him. Are we in time for tea?”

“You are quite in time, my dear aunt. Those madcap children are in the house somewhere, playing havoc with the wardrobes of my ancestors. The last time I saw Richard L’Estrange he was wearing a flowered waist-coat and a bottle-green tail-coat with brass buttons. He does not take his dressing-up cheerfully. He looks as melancholy as a dog when he thinks you have made him ridiculous. But Sheila insists.”

“She will lead him a fine dance,” said Mrs. Chapman, with humorous appreciation in her pursed-up lips.

She thrust a friendly arm through that of Sir Paul Chadwick’s and urged him towards the house.

“Let us order tea, Paul,” she said. “And I must really protest against the profanation of your ancestors’ wardrobes. I have more consideration for them than you have.”

Lord Kilrush and Cecilia followed more slowly. On the terrace they paused, just at the spot where Sir Paul Chadwick and Mr. L’Estrange had stood that afternoon, where, indeed, on the old, yellowed, marble balus-

trade, which a Chadwick of the eighteenth century had brought from Italy, two little heaps of cigar-ash testified to their recent presence. Arlo was on a hill, and from the terrace, there was a clear view away to the shining plain of the Atlantic.

Cecilia gazed at the glorious expanse of lake and bog-land and mountain for a few seconds before she spoke.

“What a place to live in!” she said, with a sigh.

“Yes, Arlo is famous for its beautiful position. There is a song about it, *Arlo Hill*, written by one of the old Jacobite poets. You know it?”

“I have never heard of it.”

“The Chadwicks were good to this old chap, though they were loyal to the reigning dynasty.”

He whistled a bar or two, and then broke into singing:

“Oh, would that my love and I  
Were wandering quietly  
On the high hill of Arlo of noble renown  
With the blackbird singing clear  
In the spring of the year!  
Oh, the blackbird and my love and I alone!”

He broke off, looking shyly at Cecilia’s unconscious face.

“I’ve always had a great admiration for

Chadwick from the time I was a small boy when he used to let me run at his heels like an adoring small dog. He was my boyhood's hero. There were so many things he could do—and can do. No one can ride like him, shoot like him, do all manner of things like him. He is so intrepid. You have seen the heads of big game that he slew. They are in the hall."

"Yes, I have seen them," Cecilia said, with a little shudder.

"Anywhere you go where there is big mountaineering to be done, or big-game shooting, or anything big in the way of outdoor achievement, you will find that Paul Chadwick's name is known. Some one wrote to me the other day that they had heard of him in Somaliland. He shot his biggest lion there. And Somaliland that time was less than a name to most Europeans. Wonderful fellow! he did it all before he was thirty."

He watched her narrowly all the time he was speaking.

"He is a splendid fellow," he went on. "A splendid fellow. Such a man as he is cannot grow old. You agree with me, Miss Grace?"

"One certainly does not think of him as old or even as middle-aged," Cecilia agreed.

When they left, crowding gaily into the wagonette, Sir Paul Chadwick stood on the

gravel-sweep before his house, bareheaded, to see the last of his guests. The front of the house where he stood was in shadow, and the light of the Eastern sky was cold upon his face.

"He looks so lonely," whispered Cecilia to Betty, who was her neighbor in the wagonette.

"Yes; I wish he would have come back with us," Betty said, lifting her hand to flutter her handkerchief for the last time towards the lonely figure.

That night Betty came into Cecilia's room. She had seemed a little silent, a little aloof to Cecilia's mind, ever since they had left Arlo. Betty's very high spirits were succeeded by a mood somewhat quiet and dull. Cecilia had glanced at Betty now and again a little anxiously. She was always the fondest of the cousins to Cecilia.

Cecilia was about to get into bed. She had just risen from her knees, and was standing in her long white nightgown, with her golden hair floating about her like a veil.

Betty took up the hair and kissed it in quiet ecstasy.

"You and I will always be friends, sha'n't we, Cecilia? No matter what happens, you and I will always be friends?"

"To be sure, Betty darling," Cecilia answered, clasping Betty in her arms.

Betty kissed her, with a little hard kiss, but she did not meet Cecilia's eyes for once. After that kiss she turned her face away.

"I thought I should like to say before I slept that nothing could ever separate *us*, Cecilia," she said. "I have never been the kind of girl to rush into foolish friendships. But where I love I love. And we will always love each other, sha'n't we, Cecilia dear?"

"To be sure," said Cecilia, fervently. "But why not? I am not the kind to change, and I am sure you are not." She was mystified as to what it was all about. No one could associate sentimentality with frank, healthy Betty, and there had been no school-girl nonsense in their wholesome alliance.

A few hours later she found a clue to Betty's odd behavior.



## CHAPTER XI

### A WITNESS

THERE was a horse-fair on at the town of Drumree, and the horse-fair always brought its own diversions. Dermot had a horse to sell, and might perhaps buy another, and the whole family were profoundly interested in Dermot's horse-dealing. Of course Dermot was to start at break of day; but the others could follow more leisurely, and celebrate, at the old-fashioned hostelry known as the Dromore Arms, Dermot's sale of the horse if a sale had taken place; if not, they could console him for his failure, and prophesy better things at the next fair.

The arrival of Sanger's Circus in the town coincided with the fair. The party were to visit the circus after lunch, and the cousins were as much excited over the small event as though it were a great one. No one could say of Lord and Lady Dromore's children that they were blasé. They had been brought up with a quite extraordinary simplicity.

Mrs. Fagan at the Dromore Arms had reserved her drawing-room for the distinguished

guests. The dining-room and the commercial-room were filled to overflowing with the fair-people. Mrs. Fagan had been cook to Lady Dromore, and was devoted to the family. She always did her best when the family honored the Dromore Arms.

She did her best on this occasion, with boiled chickens and bacon, meringues and cream, and a tart with a cheese-savory to follow; a simple menu, but she knew what the children liked. Master Guy had slipped away to the dining-room, where he fed on corned beef and ham and boiled leg of mutton, and listened to the farmers and horse-dealers fighting their battles over again, to rehearse it all when he got home for the delight of the household.

Drumree is an old-fashioned town, its main street a street of high, toppling dark houses closed across the end by a clock-tower. Looking down the main street you might think yourself to be in a foreign town, and the likeness is increased by the slimy cobblestones sloping towards the street from which the water runs off into the gutters that roar like a river after rain.

The main street was picturesque as the young people proceeded along it to the field where the circus was pitched. It was full of prancing horses led by wild-eyed, wild-headed urchins, with herds of little mountain cattle,

and here and there a flock of sheep. The cracking of whips, the shouts of warning, the cries of the drovers in the Irish tongue, filled the air with a babel of noises, increased by the bleating of sheep and the lowing of cattle. The street craved wary walking, for all the inhabitants of Drumree seemed to be out of doors to swell the incursion from the surrounding country, and yet there must have been some home-keepers, since the windows either side of the street were thrown up, and women were calling greetings and remarks over the heads of the crowd in the street to their opposite neighbors.

Dermot had got five pounds more for the horse than his highest hopes, and he had bought the girls a fairing at the little jeweler's shop in the market-place, besides ordering champagne for lunch. They were all in the highest spirits, Dermot leading the way with Guy and Betty, Mr. L'Estrange following with Sheila and Oona; behind, Lord Kilrush with Cecilia.

Their way was blocked by a little herd of wild *Kerry* cattle which were being driven along the street to the accompaniment of shouting and swearing—in *Gaelic*, which is an incomparable language for swearing—on the part of their drovers. The pedestrians were forced to retreat before the cattle's onslaught

into the untidy front garden of a square red-brick house which lay back a little way off the main street. On the gate, which hung by one hinge, was a dingy brass plate bearing the inscription:

### JAMES BRADY, L.R.C.S.I.

Kilrush noticed it casually, as one notices such things without being aware of them. The garden was a dreary waste of old pots and pans and broken crockery, through which a few hens were daintily picking their way under half a dozen twisted apple trees. The house beyond looked as neglected as the garden; its windows dim with years of dirt, its ragged curtains hanging awry, the hall-door paint blistered and fallen off in flakes.

“Poor Brady doesn’t seem to do better here than at Knocklynn,” he said, more to himself than to Cecilia, who had no idea of what he was talking about. “I suppose he can’t be expected to do well anywhere with that besetting sin of his.”

The cattle passed by, and Kilrush and Cecilia turned back to the street again. There was an open archway leading into a yard, where the stones were polished like glass by the constant passage of the rain over them. Cecilia was wearing a new pair of

shoes for the first time. Once or twice she had almost slipped on the cobblestones of the street. Now suddenly her foot slid, turned under her, and she fell.

She was up before Kilrush could help her; but she had to catch at his arm and cling to it. She found she could not stand; even to hold the foot dangling as she did gave her excruciating pain.

Kilrush looked into her dim eyes; her face to the lips was pale with the pain she was enduring.

“I am all right,” she said, faintly; “but I can’t stand. I’m afraid I’ve broken something.”

“I can’t forgive myself,” he groaned. “I ought to have been quick enough to catch you. Poor child! is it so bad?”

They were only a few steps from Dr. Brady’s gate. He lifted her with tender carefulness and carried her through the gaping crowd. A few more steps brought them to the door, which stood slightly ajar. He kicked it open with his foot, revealing an unclean hall beyond. He carried her straight in as though he owned the house, pushed open a door at the side of the hall with the same unceremoniousness, and, entering the room, deposited her gently on a torn and stained sofa covered with what had once been red damask.

It was the sofa on which her mother had lain some twenty years before, the sofa to which Maurice Grace had carried Ciss with something of the same emotions with which Kilrush carried Cecilia.

When he had laid down his precious burden, as though he gave it up unwillingly, he looked about him. A dirty old woman had followed them into the room. She had a broad, flat, white face with cunning eyes. Her hair was unkempt. Her hands were a horror. Her gown was torn in half a dozen places and gaped for want of hooks and eyes. Mary Anne Slattery had not improved with the years.

“Has the young lady met with an accident, your lordship?” she asked, showing her broken and discolored teeth in what was meant for an ingratiating smile. Kilrush had never laid eyes on her to his knowledge, but apparently she knew him.

“Yes.” He looked at her with distaste. “I’m afraid the lady has sprained her ankle. Is Dr. Brady at home?”

“No, your lordship; he had a case above in the mountains. He didn’t tell me what time to expect him home. He might come any minit’, an’ yet again he mightn’t come for hours. It’s never any use expectin’ a doctor till you see him.”

“H’m!” Kilmash was not going to encourage loquacity. “Can you get me a basin of clean water?—clean, mind you. And a piece of clean linen, if you can find such a thing.”

Mary Anne Slattery gave him a baleful look out of her little eyes as she went on her errand.

“You must bear with me if I am clumsy,” he said to Cecilia. “I shall have to get your shoe off before the ankle begins to swell. Bear with me if I hurt you. I shall be doing all in my power to avoid it. You will know I shall hate to hurt you. I wish I might have it instead.”

His lips were set hard and he was pale as he heard her groan while he got the shoe off; but it was done, and she had not fainted. Mary Anne Slattery had returned by this time with a basin of water and a roll of linen more or less clean. He did not attempt to remove the stocking. It was of very thin stuff, and open at the ankles. He put on the cold water compress over it and bandaged it quickly and deftly. Then, after holding the little foot in his hand for a lingering second, he laid it down gently.

“That is all we can do for the present,” he said. “I hope it did not hurt very much.”

“It hardly hurt at all,” she answered, untruthfully.

"I wish I could have borne the pain for you, poor child. I wish it had happened to me instead. Is it easier now?"

Mary Anne Slattery stood by, smiling covertly to herself at Quality's ways. There was a deal of villainy in Mary Anne's smile.

"Now I shall have to leave you," he said. "I must let the others know first what has become of us. Then I must hunt up some sort of a carriage to get you home."

"It needn't interfere with their enjoyment."

"Oh, no: as they have arranged to return by train, I can look after you. Any one else in the carriage would prevent your lying in a comfortable position."

Mary Anne Slattery smiled again, the wicked, covert smile.

He went unwillingly. He hated leaving her in the dirty, forlorn place. The afternoon sun had found its way in now between the boughs of the apple trees, revealing more clearly the dirty squalor of everything. Poor Brady—it was no wonder he drank; any one might drink, delivered over to such a house-keeper.

"Make Miss Grace as comfortable as you can," he said, as he left the room, still with the lingering gaze backward. "Another pillow perhaps—for her shoulders." A thought struck him of the certain uncleanness of the

pillows. "Never mind," he added hastily. "She will do well enough till I come back."

The old woman's ears had seemed to move as he mentioned Cecilia's name. She watched him go down the pathway from the house, his straight, well-knit figure dappled with shine and shade, his proud, handsome head held high.

"That's a beautiful young gentleman," she said in a wheedling voice. "I knew him when he wasn't *that* high, though he doesn't remember me. A fine, handsome young gentleman, an' a very proud way with him to the poor. The Kilrushes was always handsome and proud."

Cecilia opened her eyes. The sun was full on her face. The last thing that would have occurred to Mary Anne Slattery would have been to draw down the ragged blind to shade her. Her own face in the shadow, the old woman watched the girl cunningly. Cecilia's eyes had closed wearily. The sun on her pale hair made a dazzle about her head.

"Glory be to goodness," said Mary Anne Slattery, "you remind me of a lovely lady that's gone away out of Knocklynn many's the year ago. Miss Cecily Shannon it was, Lord Dromore's own cousin. I used to see her in the chapel before the doctor left Knocklynn an' moved to Drumree. I never wanted

to leave Knocklynn: but he said, 'Mary Anne Slattery, I take my Bible oath that go without you I won't. What sort of a careless hussy would ye be lavin' me to at all?' With that I come. I'd done for him so many years that I might as well do for him to the end. 'Tis a quare place for a poor girl to be in, and so I said to Father Tracy, 'Never mind, Mary Anne Slattery,' he says, 'it's your duty to go with the doctor.' So I came."

Cecilia passed over the bit of autobiography. But she wanted to know about mamma. No one had told her about mamma when she was young.

"It must have been my mother you remember," she said, opening her eyes. "She is just as sweet and lovely as ever. I am so glad you remember her."

"I think your dadda was here, too, doin' local demon for Dr. Brady. Och, they wor better times at Knocklynn. I never can feel to be home-like in Drumree. Whiniver you see your dadda, miss, do you ask him if he remembers Miss Slattery, Dr. Brady's housekeeper? He used to say that it was wasted I was on Knocklynn, that 'twas in Dublin I ought to be."

"Oh!" Cecilia forgot her sprain and the torturing and throbbing ankle. "How strange that you should have known papa *and* mamma!"

Then I suppose it was at Knocklynn they met."

It occurred to her for the first time that she had never heard how and where papa and mamma had met. Mamma had always been too much in the clouds, papa had always been too busy, to talk much to their little girl. Cecilia was realizing her really vast ignorance about them.

"Ay, to be sure, it was at Knocklynn they met. In Dr. Brady's house, morebetoken. If I hadn't been out of it that night—they wor wakin' Biddy Costello, the poor woman, in the village, an' you wouldn't be expectin' me to lave the hoight o' fun an' jollity behind to go trapesin' home in the terriblest storm ye ever seen—if it wasn't that I was out of it that night, maybe your dadda and mamma 'ud never have got married. Quality's terrible particular in its ways—at laste Quality like Lady Dromore. I've heard tell o' Quality that was worse nor any commonalty."

Cecilia began to think the dirty old woman rather mad. What on earth did she mean? What could her "bavin' been out of it that night" and the wake have to do with papa and mamma's marriage?

"I seen them married," went on the old woman. "'Twas early in the mornin' 'twas done, but there was a few of us got wind of

it, an' we slipped in as soon as the clerk opened the chapel-door. Father Tracy tould us we'd better be at home lookin' after the breakfasts. He was always a sharp-spoken man; but I never was afraid o' my clargy. One or two o' them stole out, but I held to my sate an' I saw them married. 'Twas a quare marriage, so it was. But your mamma looked beautiful, in spite of all they wor sayin' that it oughtn't to be allowed. Sure if it wasn't that she was like what she was she wouldn't have married him at all. Doesn't the world know that there was another gentleman?"

"Oh, please, don't say anything more!" cried Cecilia.

What was this flood of gossip, of surmise and conjecture that the horrible old woman was letting loose upon Cecilia's ears about papa and mamma? Cecilia had never anticipated anything of the kind when she had turned so eagerly to hear of papa and mamma. If there was something she was not meant to know, some mystery, something painful and dreadful, as the horrible old woman seemed to suggest, it was not for Cecilia to hear unless from papa—papa or mamma. If they had chosen not to tell her, then she would not come at their secrets through this dreadful old spy and gossip. As Mary Anne Slattery turned

her head about slyly, Cecilia saw revealed the furtive evil in the old face.

"I am tired," she said. "Please do not say any more. You need not stay. Lord Kilrush will be back very soon."

Mary Anne Slattery's eyes were more cunning than before.

"Sure he will," she said with a leer. "He wouldn't be after lavin' you if he could help it. There's some that wouldn't like to see him so took up wid ye. He's a great match, I'm tould, an' there isn't much money at the House of Dromore."

"Go, please," said Cecilia, with sudden imperiousness, pointing to the door. "Go! I do not wish to listen to you."

Mary Anne Slattery scowled and moved a step or two towards the door.

"You're very hard on the poor," she whined. "Sure I only wanted to make the time pass pleasant." Then, with a sudden change of tone: "Why, if here isn't the doctor himself? 'Tis a young lady, sir, that got her ankle twisted on the curb, bad luck to it."

Cecilia looked up with a fervent throb of thankfulness into Dr. Brady's red face, from which, despite the besottedness of years of drinking, something kindly and gentle and even wise looked out.



## CHAPTER XII

### THE CLOUD IN THE SKY

LORD KILRUSH came back with an old shandrydan of a carriage from the Dromore Arms. He did not mention that the delay was caused by the fact that “the hins, bad luck to them! had took to layin’ in th’ould shay,” and some of them had to be dispossessed. After which the shay had to be mopped out so as to banish as much as possible the recollection of the hens.

It was still reminiscent of them, but it was filled in with soft down pillows and fine woolly blankets; and once they were out in the country the old carriage could be opened.

Dr. Brady examined the ankle, and pronounced that Lord Kilrush had done as much as he could possibly have done. He helped to get Cecilia into her conveyance, doing it with so much gentleness that Cecilia’s heart went out in pity to what she conjectured of his ruined life. He settled her as comfortably as might be in the carriage, and she tried not to notice the smell of whiskey that hung about him, nor to think of his inflamed

features, because of something gentle and capable that asserted itself in spite of them.

“I’m afraid there is too great a distance between your new and your old dwellings for us to hope that you would call to see your patient,” Lord Kilrush said.

“Ah, my dear, it isn’t the distance,” the doctor answered; “it’s only that—don’t ask any questions about me at Knocklynn. ’Tis no use stirring up old troubles. Only I had different thoughts of myself when first I went to Knocklynn. If only the Lord hadn’t dealt hardly with me!”

“Poor chap!” Kilrush said, as the carriage rattled away. “I wish one could give him a leg up. He lost his wife and child during the first years he was at Knocklynn. That’s what made him take to the drink. A decent housekeeper might have saved him. The poor people still talk of him sorrowfully about Knocklynn.”

“She is a dreadful old woman,” said Cecilia, trying to conceal the intense pain she was suffering.

There was a jolt of the carriage and she cried out. He leaned forward and lifted the injured foot gently on its pillow.

“Let me hold it so,” he said gently, “till we are off the stones. I can keep it from being shaken better so.”

"How kind you are!" she said, with tears of pain in her eyes.

It was not so bad out on the long coast road which had been made in the famine years and had not had enough traffic on it since to wear it away. Dilapidated as the old chaise was, it had yet good springs, and it rolled along gently and easily for the greater part. Only now and again it came to a rough spot; and because of these, perhaps because it gave him pleasure to render her so intimate a service, he still kept the little foot in his hands.

They said very little during that homeward journey: not a word that was not heard by Patsy Kerrigan, the inn coachman, who sat stiffly in front of them recalling the great days "before the gentry was dhruv out of it, when there was half a dozen horses in the stables of the Dromore Arms, and often not wan o' them in the stall with the flyin' an' skytin' about to balls an' dinner-parties." Patsy Kerrigan's life was a perpetual lamentation for the fat days gone by and the lean present. There was not a word he did not hear, sitting so stiffly in his shabby old coat on the box: not a word he might not have told the whole world. Yet there are many things that pass from heart to heart, spirit to spirit, without being said; and to both of these young people the drive was exquisite. Kilrush reproached him-

self for a brute because he was sorry when it was over. Cecilia, lying so quietly, half-dazed with bodily pain, was steeped in a beatitude, shy and delicious, of which she was half afraid.

Lady Dromore and Sir Paul Chadwick were on the lawn when the chaise from the Dromore Arms rolled up. They came forward in alarm at seeing the half-recumbent figure of Cecilia.

“She has sprained her ankle, poor little thing,” said Kilrush, making an effort to get back to other people and everyday life. It seemed a long time that he and Cecilia had been alone and he ministering to her. “She slipped on the horrible cobbles in Drumree. They were polished bright. I thought the only thing to do was to get her home without disturbing the others’ arrangements.”

“Are you suffering very much, my poor child?” asked Lady Dromore.

Cecilia’s suffering was evident in her white face and the dark marks about her eyes.

“Poor little Cecilia! How had we better move her? There is a carrying-chair in the house.”

“You should have taken better care of her,” said Sir Paul Chadwick almost roughly to Lord Kilrush.

Before the latter could speak, Cecilia opened her eyes.

"He took great care of me," she said weakly.  
"He is kindness itself."

"Then it ought not to have happened," Sir Paul said, in the tone that brought the blood to Kilrush's cheek and made Lady Dromore look from one man to the other in puzzled distress.

The carrying-chair was brought, but it was Sir Paul Chadwick and not Lord Kilrush who got Cecilia out of the carriage. She lay a second in his arms before he put her down, and his eyes were full of a tender compassion. The younger man stood aside gloomily. He had been rebuked like a school-boy.

However, as he stood on the lawn a few minutes later, feeling greatly offended and disturbed, as much by the breaking-up of his idyllic mood, the rude jarring of his exquisite moment, as anything else, some one came up behind him and touched him on the shoulder. Looking round he saw Sir Paul Chadwick.

"I am very sorry, Kilrush," he said. "I spoke hastily. I am sure it was not your fault."

Kilrush's debonair face cleared magically.

"All right, Sir Paul," he said. "I daresay I did look as if I must have been a precious ass bringing her home like that. I should have been in a rage myself if it were anybody else."

And so amity was restored.

In the days that followed, Cecilia's sofa seemed to be the center round which life at the House of Dromore revolved. There were constant relays of visitors to her. She was heaped about with books and fruit and flowers and all manner of offerings, and there was so much sympathy for her that after the first shock and effects of the wrench were over she was fain to protest that she was winning so much sympathy on false pretenses.

The accident had extended her holiday. By this time Maurice Grace and Ciss were home from their wanderings abroad and established in a little white house at Dalkey, high on a rock like a sea-bird's nest, which they had taken for a month so that Cecilia might be with them and that they might all enjoy the sea-air together before settling down for the winter.

They had come to a very unexpected decision. The White Cottage was to be given up, and Maurice Grace was to have at last the house in Merrion Square to which his practice entitled him. It was Ciss's doing. Ciss at long last had come out of her mists and dreams. She was quite prepared to live the year round in the Square. If she felt any pang at parting with her dear cottage she did not betray it.

And, as the days passed, despite all the warm kindness, Cecilia began to wish that she were with her father and mother; for in two of the inhabitants of the House of Dromore, and those two the dearest, her sensitive spirit felt a change. She had a feeling that Lady Dromore would not be very sorry to see her go. When the knowledge was first borne in upon her it gave her exquisite pain. What had she done to cause the little coldness that was all the more palpable because Lady Dromore was invariably sweetness itself? She did not know what she could have done. She had heard of people outstaying their welcome. But how could she have outstayed her welcome among her own people, who had seemed so fond of her? The House of Dromore was unstinted in its hospitality—not like those cold houses of the great of which Cecilia had heard, where a visitor's stay was limited to so many days and hours, and a constant stream of arriving and departing visitors made a cold *simulacrum* of warm hospitality. There might not be much money at the House of Dromore, but hospitality there, as elsewhere in Ireland, was a matter of course, not to be counted as a superfluity. In that excellent country where the poor housewife puts an extra handful of meal, or an extra bit of bacon or a few potatoes in the pot “for the man coming over the hill,”

hospitality comes as naturally as the air its people breathe. And the House of Dromore was an open house, even if the Dromores were poor for their station.

In Betty, too, there was a subtle change. Sometimes she would have a spasmodic outburst of tenderness for Cecilia, but the outburst over, the little cloud would descend between them again, something which Cecilia could not define nor brush away. Once Cecilia asked piteously what she had done; and Betty, not looking at her, had answered with a cold brightness which was not at all deceptive, that Cecilia had done nothing, nothing at all. *What could Cecilia have done?*

That was what Cecilia wanted to know. With that strange something in Lady Dromore and in Betty, what comfort was it to Cecilia that the boys yet adored her openly; that Lord Dromore patted her on the head as he came and went with an absent-minded kindness; that Sir Paul Chadwick was ever at her beck and call; even that Kilrush, when he returned from those visits to Dublin which he departed on with obvious unwillingness, brought her all manner of delicate offerings. Nothing consoled her for the strange coldness on the part of the two she loved best out of all the family.

Mrs. Chapman occasionally visited Cecilia's

sofa, and would look at her with bright, half-amused eyes: she had a perpetual air of looking on at the human comedy, but would say very little. She had been kind to Cecilia, giving her a quaint ornament or two and a bit of filmy lace, because she was Cecily's daughter.

In her quiet moments, when she was left a little while to herself, it had occurred to Cecilia again how easy a matter it would be to bring Cecily to the home of her people: how natural a thing, seeing the accident that had happened to her girl. But no one suggested the easy, natural thing.

There came an afternoon of sultry heat when Cecilia slept on her sofa, which had been carried out of doors on to the terrace. Cecilia slept, and into her ear there came a sound of voices —at first mingling with her dreams, then distinct from them, the words they said in time apprehended.

“And you think Betty cares?” said a voice that was surely Mrs. Chapman’s.

“My friend, not to a soul on earth would I reveal it but to you. Not to the child’s father even. I am as careful for Betty as Betty could be for herself. But to you I confess it, because you love Betty. I am sure she cares.”

The voice was Lady Dromore’s

“Haven’t you noticed that Betty no longer

dances through life? Betty has grown serious. When she is gay it is fitful and spasmodic; to my ear her laughter does not ring true.

“Before Cecily’s daughter came, Kilrush was, if not quite in love with Betty, at all events nearly in love. Cecily’s daughter is a heavenly creature, like Cecily herself. I confess I dread Cecily’s inheritance for her. I had rather have my wholesome Betty for Kilrush.

“She cannot go just yet. Poor child, to think that I should want her to go, the pretty creature. Yet I have to think of my own child first.”

“And of Kilrush.” Mrs. Chapman spoke with an emphasis. There was a second’s pause: then she went on: “And Paul Chadwick is infatuated with her. Strange that, having broken his heart over the mother, he should fall in love with the daughter. It is a thousand pities he is not ten or fifteen years younger.”

“That would be a crux, too. How would Ciss meet Paul Chadwick? I wonder if he has quite faded from her memory during the years?”

“You are afraid to have her here?”

“It might unsettle her. She has been con-

tent with the good *bourgeois* husband all those years."

"Is he so impossible?"

"He improved with the years. The last time I saw him—it is a good many years now—I thought he had gained greatly in a certain quiet dignity of manner. He has done wonderfully well in his profession, better than any one could have anticipated. He was very much a young man of the people in those days, but—I forgot that, seeing his wonderful love for Ciss. On that plane we met."

"H'm!" Mrs. Chapman's tone was dry. "It might upset the whole business if she were to come face to face with Paul Chadwick. Paul grows handsomer, more distinguished-looking with the years. If I were a young girl, I should be head over ears in love with Paul Chadwick. Do you suppose Cecily has ever realized that her old lover lives? The girl will have mentioned his name in her letters surely."

"Dear me! What a coil it is!" Lady Dromore sighed. "I am almost sorry that we ever came across Ciss's daughter. By the way, Betty seemed to find nothing wrong with Ciss. She raved of her beauty and grace. I can see Ciss trailing about as Betty described her."

Cecilia sitting up on her sofa, with wide eyes

of grief and pain, beat with her hands at her delicate ears but could not prevent the passage of the words. She was intolerably hurt, so hurt that she felt with the hopelessness of youth as though she never again could be un-hurt and happy as of old.

## CHAPTER XIII

### A SQUIRE OF LOW DEGREE

CECILIA left the House of Dromore a day or two later, before her ankle was nearly well, as Lady Dromore complained almost tearfully. The last thing Lady Dromore wished was that Ciss's daughter should go off hastily, unfit for travel or movement as though she were not a dear child of the house and her welfare as dear to them as that of one of her own children.

They all protested against Cecilia's leaving them. Why, half the programme they had devised for her delight was not exhausted. And Guy had counted that he and Cecilia should travel together as far as Dublin when he was on his way back to school. That journey was to have been Guy's opportunity for showing Cecilia that he could take care of her as well as the grown-up ones who had pushed him ruthlessly from Cecilia's side, as though fourteen had no rights and no feelings. There was a loud outcry when Cecilia said she must go; only Betty's protests rang feeble to Cecilia's ear. Betty was invariably sweet to

Cecilia, cold and sweet; and the coldness nearly broke Cecilia's heart, for she had conceived an ardent girl's passion for Betty. She longed to tell her, only she dared not, that nothing in all the world would have induced her to stand in Betty's way. She looked back heart-brokenly on all the times and occasions in which by accident she and Kilrush had been thrown together. She had had no right to those stolen, accidental sweetneses. And what a dreadful thing it was that she should have enjoyed them at Betty's expense! that the eyes and the lips and the turn of the head and the voice and the step of Betty's lover should have come to mean so much to her!

Poor Cecilia watered her pillow with her tears during the night that intervened between making her decision known and her going. She was feverishly anxious to be gone before Kilrush could return. She never wanted to see him again, Betty's lover! Oh, if he could know the things she had been feeling and thinking about him! To be sure he had only meant kindness, such kindness and affection as they had all shown to her. She covered her face with her hands and cowered in the silence of the night from the thoughts she had had of his kindness—Betty's lover!

Lady Dromore's genuine trouble over Cecilia's leaving so abruptly, before her ankle

was well, seemed to hurt Cecilia sharply. Lady Dromore's sensitive conscience had been fretting her. Had she by word or look, by omission or commission, by something subtler than either let the poor child feel that she must go? Her anxious sweetness was hard for Cecilia to bear.

But at last it was all over. She had seen the last of the kind, happy faces, and the waving handkerchiefs, as the train puffed its way out of the station.

She had the carriage to herself. Lady Dromore had been rather shocked at the thought of Cecilia traveling alone, and had implored her to wait till she had provided an escort. But at the mere question of delay Cecilia had displayed such a positive anguish of desire to be gone that Lady Dromore, sighing, had given up the contest. To be sure, girls were very different from what they had been in her time. They did all manner of things now that would have been inadmissible in her time. Even her girls when they left her side did things her mother would never have considered admissible for her. She supposed she was old-fashioned. Sighing, she gave up her struggle to do things decently and in order for Cecilia.

It was fortunate that Cecilia had the carriage to herself, and continued to have it to herself till she reached Limerick Junction.

She wanted to be alone, and she meant not to weep; she had meant to endure the sudden chilliness and grayness that had come upon her. But the sight of their gifts—the flowers, the fruit, the luncheon-basket, the books to be read on the way, the puppy which Guy had given her struggling in its basket—all moved her to tears, to think that so much had been, and was all over.

For a little while she watched with bleak eyes the puppy's hamper as it wriggled here and there in the puppy's frantic efforts after freedom. At last she cut the cord and lifted the lid of the basket. The puppy sprang into her arms, and shivering with delight, fell to an ardent licking of her hands and her face. She wept on the silky head, while the puppy did his best to show that he was sorry for her and longed to console her. After all, he was a comforting thing, and presently the tears ceased to flow, and she sat up in the carriage clasping the puppy closer to her while she surveyed the landscape with eyes for once undelighted.

Ciss met her at the station, and gave her a warm welcome for Ciss. She was apparently quite unaware of the dullness and flatness which Cecilia found in herself; but then Ciss had never been an observant person. The distance which had been steadily lessening between her and those she loved yet held her

somewhat apart. She saw nothing amiss apparently in Cecilia's lack-luster answers to her many questions about the House of Dromore. Many questions there were. It seemed oddly incongruous in Ciss that she should "run on;" but run on she did, and Cecilia was relieved that she had not to bear the burden of the conversation. Fortunately, her letters had been diffuse. Up to the day before yesterday she had written sheets to Ciss about the life among the cousins. Ciss knew so much about it that she was quite capable of answering herself.

Presently she asked Cecilia about Sir Paul Chadwick.

"I knew him when I was a girl," she said, the mood of quiet dreaminess coming down upon her. "He was very handsome then. Is his hair so dark? Are his eyes so bright? Is he as distinguished-looking as of old? And so you went to Arlo? Strange that he has never given Arlo a mistress."

It was easier to talk about Sir Paul Chadwick than about the cousins: the thought of Betty's cold sweetness ached like a sore place in Cecilia's memory of the cousins; so Cecilia talked of Sir Paul while the train bore them out along the shores of Dublin Bay, between the sea and the mountains to Dalkey. The little house with the Irish name comforted

Cecilia somewhat for the loss of the White Cottage. They were to have Glan-na-Tore for their own, summer after summer. It was perched on rocks at the sea's edge. It was bare and clean and shining like the deck of a ship. From these windows you saw nothing but sea: from those nothing but mountains. A flight of steps led one from the door at the back of the little hall down to the rocks, between which the tide poured in and made, at high tide, a delightful bathing-place. Despite her broken heart, Cecilia was glad of this little, clean, bright eyrie, in every room of which one tasted and smelt the sea. It would have been harder to go back to Merrion Square.

The Merrion Square house was being furnished up for Ciss and Cecilia. Ciss took characteristically little interest in the house decoration and plenishing, pathetically little, considering her husband's thought and care for her.

But Cecilia roused herself from the new apathy which had come upon her to be interested. Cecilia from the time she could walk alone had always had an unchildish understanding of the fact that she must be interested in papa's things because mamma heeded so little. Papa would consult her as though she were mamma. "Your mother would like this, Cecilia?" "Your mother never could bear such

a color, Cecilia?" Between them they pieced out her tastes and her fancies so that they might be gratified.

Cecilia had written dutifully to Lady Dromore. She had had letters from her, from Dermot, from Guy, from Betty, letters which she read till she knew them by heart, letters which she carried about with her and read at odd moments.

She had a good many moments to herself when her father was in town and did not require her companionship. Ciss could always amuse herself at her harp, at the piano, embroidering, doing her exquisitely fine needle-work, when she did not seem to need even her daughter's companionship. Cecilia liked to steal away to a nook in the rocks, where she was freed from all human observation. The puppy, Beau, would accompany her and make himself happy on a corner of her skirt. There would be nothing visible but the sea and the island: nothing living except the sea-gulls and occasionally a fisherman or two in their boats inspecting their lines.

She was sitting, her hands clasped about her knees, looking away to the island. Farther away, Howth showed purple and golden with the heather and the gorse. She was sitting in shadow, but beyond the little house the sunset was flooding the world with its splendor.

She was remembering with some wonder how papa had asked her yesterday, with a hesitation that had struck her as curious, about Sir Paul Chadwick. He had asked her minutely about him, how he looked, how he spent his life, what people thought of him, and so on till he had extracted from Cecilia all the information she could give him.

“You know him, papa?” she said, at last; and remembered something of the conversation she had overheard between Lady Dromore and Mrs. Chapman. Sir Paul had once been her mother’s lover and might yet be hers. But, no, no; she shrank from the latter suggestion. He was too old for love, to Cecilia’s mind, comparing his distinguished age with another’s golden youth.

“No; I did not know him. He was an old friend of your mother’s. In the days when I was at the House of Dromore he was away on his travels. He was a great traveler.”

“Yes, I know. I have read something about his travels. And I knew he was an old friend of mother’s. She talked to me about him.”

Something passed over Maurice Grace’s face as though he had been flicked by a whip and shrank from it.

“Ah!” he said. “I thought she had forgotten him,” and then he asked no more.

Cecilia was thinking of her father and mother

and Sir Paul Chadwick, watching idly the little pool at her feet left by the outgoing tide, which was full of floating, delicate bits of seaweed, tiny crabs, little seashells and many such pretty things.

Suddenly her name was spoken close to her. She looked up and the color came to her cheek, color which was misunderstood by the one who had caused it.

“So you are back, Cecilia?” said Bernard Grace, sitting down beside her familiarly. “I came at the first possible moment. I was in London, as of course you heard, giving evidence before a House of Lords’ Committee. That’s the place for a man to live! London’s alive, not like this old dead city of ours.”

Cecilia moved a little away from him. His presence had given a rude shock to her dreams.

“I had not heard you were away,” she said, coldly.

“By Jove! You don’t mean to say they didn’t tell you? You might have seen it in the papers for the matter of that. I suppose they took a paper at those fine cousins of yours? Or hadn’t they intelligence enough for even a daily paper? Lord Dromore’s one of the dead sort, isn’t he? No good to anybody but himself. A standing argument against the rights of the classes—hey?”

Again the color came to Cecilia’s cheek.

She refused to answer Bernard Grace's questions.

"How did you find me here?" she asked.

"I asked Nannie, who opened the door to me, where you were and she told me. I didn't come to see your mother. I am not the sort who goes to see mothers—hey, Cecilia?" He emphasized his point with a nudge of his elbow. "So I just walked straight out. And now, aren't you glad to see me, little girl? I can tell you you seem to me to have been a confoundedly long time away. I'd have come after you if I hadn't had to go to London. What would you have thought if you had seen me walking into the House of Dromore, hey?"

Cecilia's vision of him walking into the House of Dromore was happily concealed from him. She made no answer. In the shadow where she was sitting her small face looked oddly cold, cold and a little unhappy: contemptuous as well.

Bernard Grace, who was usually happy enough when talking about himself, noticed her silence at last. He turned and stared at her. Then, to her intense indignation, lifted her face by the chin. She pulled away from him angrily.

"Hoity toity!" he laughed; "we're cousins, aren't we? You needn't be so angry, Cecilia.

Lots of girls would let me do more than that, if I wanted to."

She eyed him with cold distaste; and Beau, as though he understood the scene, fell to barking wildly, with every appearance of hostility, at Bernard Grace.

"Never mind," he said. "I won't do it again. Till you ask me, at least, Cecilia. Shut up, you fool of a dog! I'm quite friendly to your mistress. You don't look as though they'd been very good to you, Cecilia, those fine relations of yours. What have they been doing?"

He put his face nearer to hers as he asked the question, and misunderstood again the pained flood of color that momentarily rushed to her cheeks.

"You'd better have come to us," he said, with a self-satisfied air. "You are not looking at all your best, Cecilia. Not happy with them, hey? I saw old Dromore once, and he looked as though he were made of starch. I've been hobnobbing with much bigger men on the other side than he is, Cecilia. You should see how they listened to my evidence. And the compliments they paid me. London's a splendid place. I felt more at home there than I do here: though it wouldn't do to make that statement in public, hey? You've never been to

London. What a hermit you are! You've never been anywhere. Your husband will have to show you the world. What would you think of London and Paris for a honeymoon, eh, Cecilia?"

Cecilia looked at him with such positive aversion that it pierced even his armor of self-conceit.

"Hang it all!" he said. "Don't look at me like that. I'm not a snake nor a toad nor a black beetle. You haven't got so uppish as all that because the Dromores have taken notice of you at last, after all those years, have you? I can tell you it isn't every man in my position would want to marry you, so you needn't be so stand-off and particular."

Cecilia, not frightened, but shocked by his violence, had stood up. They were confronting each other on the narrow little platform between the rocks. The puppy stood between them growling, and showing a little ridge of hair along his silky back.

"I haven't forgotten how that fellow behaved to me the last time I saw you," he went on, "though I had made up my mind to overlook it so far as you were concerned. I'm as good a man as he and better, and I'll show it to him if I get the chance. What do I care about beggarly Irish lords? They didn't treat your mother very well between them; and if

they're going to play fast and loose with you, I'll see to it, Cecilia."

He had raised his voice more than he knew.

"Be quiet," Cecilia said, imperiously. "You don't want the whole neighborhood to hear you."

"I don't care who hears me," he said, stammering in his passion; but nevertheless he did lower his voice. And now Ciss came out on the balcony of her little room and called down to him.

"Is it you, Bernard? I did not know you were here. Will you not come in and have some tea?"

He answered her surlily. Nevertheless he went and left Cecilia alone, to her great relief. She did not join them in Ciss's little drawing-room where, in a sulky silence, Bernard Grace drank half a dozen cups of tea before taking his departure for the railway station; Ciss, with her air of absolute unconsciousness, bridging over his silence by speech of her own.

"You should not provoke him, Cecilia," said Ciss, when he had gone at last. "Bernard is not a nice person when he is angry. What was his voice raised about? He does not know that he should not speak like that to a woman. Yet for papa's sake and for Gran's sake, it is better to avoid an open quarrel with Bernard Grace and his family."

“He is hateful,” said Cecilia, a red spot in either cheek. She had not answered her mother’s question, and Ciss forbore to press it.

## CHAPTER XIV

### “GOOD-BY FOR EVERMORE”

THE Druid's Chair on Killiney Hill overlooks the most wonderful picture of mountain and sea and smiling country. Cecilia loved to walk there and to overlook the beauty of the world, although now it had no longer the joyous appeal it had once had. Once she had sat in the Druid's Chair and wished vaguely, romantically, for love and a lover. Now the lover had come and the love, but neither was hers by right. If she could make both hers by reaching out her hand for them she must not do it!

On this late afternoon of September she had the place pretty well to herself. The nursemaids and children who had had the enterprise to climb the steep hill had gone home to their tea. For quite half an hour no one had toiled in sight, to travel round the four sides of the hill, staying a few moments to gaze at the changing views as they presented themselves, before disappearing down the steep path again, little by little.

Cecilia sat and looked into the sunset. She faced the mountains, the eastward slopes of

which were in shadow. She felt strangely lonely, with a girl's wistful loneliness. Away there to the south-west were those with whom she had been so very happy. Ungrateful Cecilia, not conscious of ingratitude, dated happiness from her visit to the House of Dromore, not being old enough or wise enough to count the happiness which always remained to her.

She rested her chin in her hand, her elbow on her knee, and gazed away with mournful eyes to the south-west where lay the happiness from which she was henceforth excluded. She said to herself that she was forgotten. She was at home ten days and no second letter had come from the cousins. *Of course* Lord Kilrush had returned to them from Dublin. He always stayed at the House of Dromore instead of going to his own great empty house when he was in those parts. And *of course* he was quite happy with Betty and Betty with him. They never missed Cecilia. She had come into their lives for a little while and gone out of them again. She was only an accident, poor Cecilia! And Betty had been glad to see her go.

She was so absorbed in her melancholy that she did not notice a long shadow flung on the sunlit sward in front of her till the substance came so close that it stood between her and the

sun. She looked up startled, with a fear that Bernard Grace had come to press his unwelcome suit, and saw—Lord Kilrush.

He was come and the autumn day which had been full of vague sadness was suddenly flooded with delight. The blood rushed through her veins. Her heart, after the first quick leap of joy, settled down to a soft palpitation. He was looking at her with something in his gaze that made the blood beat in her cheek. Her eyes fell before his. For a few moments she forgot Betty.

"Well," he said; "I called at Glan-na-Tore, and your mother told me where I should find you. She was awfully good to me. I was so afraid I might have missed you somehow on the road that I nearly shouted when I saw you. Are you glad to see me, Cecilia?"

He had been holding her hand in his. Now he sat down beside her without relinquishing it and looked into her face, averted from him under the large hat she was wearing. What he saw there apparently satisfied him, for he smiled to himself.

"Are you glad to see me, Cecilia?" he repeated softly. "I am so glad to see you, little Cecilia. You can't imagine how bereft a place the House of Dromore seemed when I came back and found you gone."

An untimely visitor came round the corner

of the hill and gazed at them curiously. Kilrush objurgated the harmless person mentally, and sat bolt upright, having dropped Cecilia's hand. He was occupied for a few seconds, till the visitor passed out of sight, in selecting a cigar from his case. When the last vestige of the intruder had disappeared, he laid the cigar with deliberation back in its case, and put out his hand again for Cecilia's.

But what had happened in that tiny interval? The intruder, some harmless tourist or other, might have been an evil magician who, with a stroke of his wand, had laid Kilrush's shining castle in ruins.

Cecilia was chilly and pale, as he had seen her at first and been dismayed so to see her. She was pinched—like a white flower in the frost. Not a trace was there of the rosy Cecilia, just opening to love like a new rose, of a few minutes before. Her eyes seemed as though tears had frozen in them. She looked at him, piteous and alarmed. Good heavens—what had he done to bring that look of fear to a woman's face, to any woman's, much less to his sweetheart's?

“What is the matter?” he asked in dismay. “I thought we knew each other well enough, darling—haven't I been making love to you ever since that day at the convent?—for me to show how glad I was to see you without fright-

ening you. Why, child, I thought I had only to put out my arms to you and that you would come into them, my shy bird. What is it, my little Cecilia?"

There was not a soul in sight. Not that he looked to see if there was. He put his arms about her impulsively and drew her to him. For a second she was against his breast. Through her own heart-beats she could feel the great passionate throbs of his heart against her side.

Then an amazing thing happened—for Kilrush. She repulsed him. Her two hands which he had lifted to his neck struggled from his hold and repulsed him, pushed hard against his breast. Her mouth avoided his kisses. She drew away from him, almost violently.

"No, no," she said, "you must never say such things: you must never do such things again."

"Why not," he asked, "since I love you? Why do you set yourself against me, since you love me? Come back into my arms, Cecilia. I have been patient long enough, giving you time. You would know how patient if you knew how much my arms have wanted you."

For a second the rose again beat in her cheeks. His words intoxicated her. Then a great horror withered all her joy. She, to steal Betty's lover! To repay all their dear good-

ness to her by such a treachery! She would rather die ten thousand deaths than do such a thing.

“Are you coming?” he asked, looking into her face, “coming to tell me that you love me? Don’t set yourself against me, child. I have been careful of you because you are so young,” he said it with a triumphant joy in his voice. “Because you are so young. But I have waited long enough. I am hungry to hear you say, ‘I love you.’”

“Oh, but I shall never say it,” she said, breaking into tears. How was she to make him understand without betraying Betty and herself? Why, it was worse than she had thought. He loved her. She had come like a mean thing into the house that had received her with so much kindness and had stolen her cousin’s lover. Betty would be heart-broken. No wonder Betty had been cold to her. But it was an infamy she would not have thrust upon her, no matter how the traitor within the gates begged and pleaded with her to yield to her lover.

He was horrified at the sight of her tears. He would have caressed her in his tender pity, but she turned away from him. At sight of her distress his passion seemed to die within him, leaving only pity and tenderness behind.

“I am so sorry,” he said. “I have frightened

you. I thought you knew, that you were prepared for me. Don't cry, Cecilia. I could kill myself for having made you cry."

She staunched the tears with her little wisp of handkerchief. Her sobbing had a heart-broken sound. He stood by unhappily, watching her while she struggled to regain her self-control.

From somewhere over between the darkening mountains there came the sound of a steam-whistle, and Cecilia started and began to walk quickly away from him.

"What is it?" he asked.

"Six o'clock and the gates will close in about ten minutes. We shall only have time to get out."

She pulled her veil down over her face and hurried on with a down-bent head.

"I could get you out if necessary," he said, keeping his place beside her.

The sun had dropped behind the mountains now, and as they went down the steep way between the railings it was twilight.

"Please believe that I am awfully sorry I distressed you," he said, in a constrained voice. "You have forgiven me?"

"There was nothing to forgive," she answered, with a sob in her breath. "Only, you must never speak of it again."

"Never, Cecilia?"

There was blank incredulity in his voice.

“Never. You must forget me altogether. Sometime, perhaps when you are married, we may meet again.”

“If it isn’t some nonsense picked out of a story-book,” he said, almost roughly; “what is the meaning of it, Cecilia? Is there any one else?”

She could not say that there was, so she answered him almost with vehemence, because she was afraid of herself.

“No, no, there is no one else. But you should not ask me. Indeed you should not ask me. If I ask you to go away and not speak of this again it is enough.”

He looked at her in wonder.

“I thought you were so gentle, Cecilia.”

They were at the gates by this time, and another step brought them into the darkness of the tree-hung road. They hurried along side by side. The evening had turned cold now with a suggestion of frost.

“Let us be friends,” he pleaded; “if we are not to be more, let us be friends.”

She turned to him almost eagerly.

“Why, we should always be friends,” she said. “You have been so kind to me. You were my first friend, after Betty, at the House of Dromore.”

“Ah, Betty,” he repeated. “Betty is an un-

rivaled friend. Betty will be sorry that I have failed."

She pushed up her veil from her face and stared at him in consternation. Her face was flushed from the tears and her eyes shining.

"You did not tell Betty?" she said, incredulously.

"Betty knew. I had all her good wishes. Betty and I have been pals this many a year."

Cecilia made a sound like a groan. She felt almost bitter against him. How he must have hurt Betty! Between them how they had contrived to hurt Betty!

"You must tell her," she said in a low voice, "that . . . that . . . it was a mistake, that I asked you not to speak of it again, that we agreed to be friends, friends and nothing more."

If she had been looking at him, the expression of his face would have contradicted the apparent resignation of his words.

"Friends and nothing more," he repeated. "Betty will be sorry, Cecilia. There never was such a good pal as Betty."

They had emerged now on the winding road that encloses the sickle of the bay. Above the bay a young silver moon was rising, making broken reflections of itself in the lightly rippled water. Against the rosy haze of the distant sky the smoke of a steamer drifted. Some-

where above them a thrush was singing its autumnal song of a forlorn sweetness so different from the jocund happiness of its song in spring.

The evening and the sea and the bird's song filled Cecilia's heart with a passionate sadness. Not yet, not yet while he walked by her side could she be forlorn and dreary, as she would be when those last precious moments of his presence were gone and he had left her for ever. The very young say their "for evers" so lightly, and feel so little surprised to find them so revocable.

Kilrush walked by her side, talking now merely polite commonplaces. The few people they met turned to look after the couple with their young beauty and grace and distinction.

"Lord love ye!" said a cheerful beggar, sitting at the gates of the Sorrento grounds. "Lord love ye, give the poor woman a copper for the sake of the beautiful young lady that loves your honor!"

Kilrush dropped a half-crown into the outstretched hand, and was followed by a flood of blessings upon his own and the young lady's future, from which Cecilia was glad to hurry out of hearing. Some of the blessings as they came floating after her made her very ear-tips rosy.

Kilrush smiled as he heard them.

"So much for so little," he said.

And now they had ascended the hill, and were at the gates of Glan-na-Tore. He took Cecilia's hand in his and held it. The last pale light of the sky was on her face.

"So much for so little," he repeated. "Perhaps, after all, some of her wishes may come true, Cecilia." He lifted her fingers to his lips.

"We will hope that they may come true," he said, and lifted his hat and was gone.



## CHAPTER XV

### CECILIA LEARNS THE TRUTH

To her dismay, for she was conscious of her recent tears, Cecilia found the drawing-room occupied by Gran, looking her stiffest in the purple moire antique which had been her gown of ceremony during all the days of her married life, her lace shawl, clasped by a cameo brooch, and her bonnet resplendent with purple pansies.

Not often did Gran don her war-paint to visit her son's house. Usually she kept it for her visits to the Patrick Graces and the other cousins, near and distant, who were more or less prosperous publicans or farmers or shop-keepers.

She looked at Cecilia with her hard, bright, dark eyes, which softened as they rested on Cecilia's face. Her cheeks seemed redder than usual, and her mouth was snapped a little tighter, all of them signs of something unusual in Gran's mood. So Cecilia remembered her in a serious illness of her childhood, when Gran had swept away the nurses and carried the child triumphantly back to health by her good

nursing, which allowed of neither sleep nor rest for herself. So Gran had gone about with her eyes bright, her mouth snapped to, her cheeks a hard crimson, when death had to be fought and her lamb's precious life saved. The lips had smiled, the eyes softened only when they rested on the child.

Cecilia was not afraid of Gran in her most formidable moods. At least she had never been afraid of her hitherto. Now, for the first time in her life, Cecilia had a secret to guard. Her eyes fell before the interrogation in Gran's. The color came hotly to her cheeks and then ebbed away, leaving her paler than before. She turned her face away from Gran and stood with one foot on the fender, one hand fiddling nervously with the ornaments of the mantelpiece. The oblong gilt-framed mirror revealed herself to her guilty glance. Obviously she had been crying.

"Cecilia hasn't been gallivanting by herself?" said Gran, in a severe voice to Ciss. "'Tis no hour for a child like her to be out alone round these lonesome roads."

Her eye was coldly accusing as it fell on Ciss. Gran's ideas in regard to etiquette were as severe as Lady Dromore's own, widely different as their bringing-up and environment had been.

"Oh no," said Ciss, with one of her light

laughs. "I sent a friend after Cecilia. I guessed he would find her at the Druid's Seat. Cecilia is so fond of mooning about there. Lord Kilrush found you, Cecilia?"

"Yes, he found me," Cecilia answered, conscious of Gran's scrutiny and turning a more unhappy red. "He walked back with me to the gate."

"Why didn't you bring him in and introduce him to Gran?" Ciss asked. "He is a charming fellow, Cecilia. I thought him very pleasant before, but he improves on acquaintance. I meant to have asked him to stay for dinner."

"Who is this young man that squires my granddaughter about in the darkness of the night?" Gran asked sternly.

Again Ciss laughed.

"Tell Gran all about Lord Kilrush, Cecilia," she said. "I am going out. I've been shut up all day. I shall walk down to Kingstown, meet your father at the 6.45, and walk home with him. Gran says she won't stay for dinner. Persuade her to, and to stay for the night. We can easily telegraph to Bridget that she's not going back to-night."

Ciss went out of the room, and they heard her singing as she went up the stairs.

"Your mother is in high good-humor," Gran said. "I don't approve of her goin' down to Kingstown by herself. Some one might speak

to her and frighten her. She looks too young and pretty to be wanderin' about by herself. I wonder your father allows it. It isn't my idea of what's right, but then I'm only a poor, plain old woman."

Ciss ran down the stairs as lightly as a girl, called to little Beau, and they heard the door close behind her as she went out.

Gran looked at her watch.

"I sha'n't stay for dinner," she said, "and I sha'n't stay for the night. I'm too old to sleep out of my own house. I told the cabman who brought me here to call for me again. And the pony and trap will meet me at Westland Row. And now, Cecilia child, take off your hat and sit down beside me. I want to see how you are lookin' and hear what you've been doin'. It's been lonely at the Bawn Farm without you, child! It's the first summer for long that you haven't paid your old Granny a visit."

Cecilia did as she was bidden, and having laid her outdoor things on a distant sofa she came back and sat down on a low stool facing her grandmother. She felt oddly shy and nervous of Gran's questions. Why had mamma gone out and left her to Gran? The old, hard, bright eyes across the intervening space seemed to pierce her through, discovering her secrets.

“H’m!” said Gran, grimly, after a few seconds of scrutiny, beneath which Cecilia sat unhappily. “You’re thinner, Cecilia, and there’s something in your face wasn’t there when you went away. What have they been doin’ to you, my lamb?”

“Nothing, Gran.” Cecilia blinked nervously under the steady gaze. “They were kindness itself. Nothing could exceed their goodness.”

“Ay, ay, I know all that!” The old voice was bitter and dissatisfied. “I know the ways of such as them. ’Tis easy for them to get round an innocent child like you and win your heart only to break it with coldness and neglect. ’Twas myself was always against the visit. Why should my son’s child go where her father wouldn’t be made welcome? No, nor her mother either, for the matter of that.”

“Gran!” Cecilia lifted her head proudly. “You don’t know my cousins. Every one spoke with such love of mamma, and . . . and . . .” she was remembering that very little had been said about papa, “and . . . Lady Dromore spoke so kindly of papa. I am quite, quite sure you are mistaken.”

“Oh, ay, he served her ladyship’s turn. But he was only the dirt under her feet after all. Your mother’s different, to be sure, because she was one of themselves, and so would

you be, I dare say, if so be it was that you was content to give up your blood-relations, your father that has slaved for you and your mother, and is slavin' now. Your father had the greatest love for your mother that I ever knew a man to have for a woman; and for all I know, and he knows, he doesn't rightly get a return. Ay, and your old Gran, and decent people like the Patrick Graces that are a credit to any one. I well remember her ladyship's face when Rosy Grace had no more sense than to be askin' her to go to one of her At Homes. Rosy was always up to some nonsense or another. I can see the two of their faces now close together."

The old woman smiled to herself with an acrid humor; but Cecilia was beyond seeing the humor of Mrs. Patrick's juxtaposition with Lady Dromore.

"You're saying a great many things I don't understand, Gran," she said, pitifully. "I wish you'd tell me what you mean. There was a terrible old woman at the doctor's house in Drumree, where I was brought in the day I sprained my ankle. She said several strange things I did not understand. I thought she was mad, or perhaps had been drinking. She said that she knew papa before he married mamma when he was *locum tenens*—she called it 'local demon'—to Dr. Brady who had been in Knocklynn."

"I remember as well as though it was yesterday, though it is more than twenty years ago —the day your father had the letter from Dr. Brady, engagin' him. It might ha' been as well he'd never gone. Not that I've a word to say against your sweet, pretty mother. And as for him, if it was to be done over again he'd do it, and take the risks if they was ten thousand times as great. I wasn't brought up to think much o' that kind of love. The old people in my times said it was all nonsense. I married your grandfather when he was sixty and I was twenty; and it worked better than many a love-match I've seen since I came to Dublin. It was a queer thing that our son should have gone mad for love, for a madness it was. And sure, God help him, he doesn't know rightly to this day whether he has her heart or not."

Cecilia listened to her in a tortured patience.

"You are hurting me, Gran," she said. "What are all these mysteries? I have a right to know—haven't I? I am no longer a school-girl. Tell me how it came that papa and mamma married."

"You've a right to know from the beginnin'. When you know you can choose between us and them. Why Lord Dromore's cousin married the son of Tom Grace that had a little farm, and morebetoken kept the Red Cow public-house at Cross-in-Hand? I gave it up when

your grandfather died. It was no employment for women. Well, dearie—put your mind back a bit. Did you ever notice anything about your mamma? That she wasn't quite like other people? More like a big child, the poor innocent lamb?"

Cecilia nodded.

"Yes, I know. She seems different now, as though she were growing up."

"That's just it, jewel." The old woman's voice had an exquisite tenderness. "I think 'tis the growin'-up your father's frightened of. Not that he's said a word about it to me. He's the silentest man alive about his wife. But I can see the terror of it in his face. Don't I know the child I bore? Well, it was like this, my pet. Your poor mamma was a little queer in the head when your father married her. She'd had a great trouble. She was engaged to be married to some fine gentleman, and he was away on his travels, and a report came that he'd been killed and eaten by savages. She heard it of a sudden, and her poor head went. And then, as misfortune would have it, your father came into the neighborhood and she took a fancy that he was the one she lost. And the poor child slipped away from them all one stormy night and came knockin' at his window, and he took her in like a perished bird. She was half-drownded, so she was, and fright-

ened out of her life by the storm. He gave her back to them as soon as ever he could; but they were frightened out of their lives that the people might talk"—the old woman blushed as she said it, and looked away from her grandchild's agitated face—"there's people that might talk—the world's that wicked—about even an innocent lamb like your mother. And so, jewel dear, and there she was callin' to your father by the name of the gentleman she was to have married, and spendin' fondness on him whenever she caught a sight of him and frettin' her life out when he left her. And he'd been mad in love with her from the first day he seen her saying her prayers in the chapel. So the poor boy saw a way out of it to save her from the asylum that he should marry her; and he up and spoke to them about it. The lord wouldn't listen to it at first, but her ladyship was in his favor. And so they were married, the small publican's son and Lord Dromore's cousin, and the Dromores are terrible proud and her ladyship the proudest of all."

She paused for breath, and Cecilia broke in with an impassioned word.

"I love papa for it," she said. "Oh, I love him for it. Poor mamma, how good it was that she should have won such a wonderful love!"

"Ah, that's right, my dearie, that's right.

You'll never listen to them that 'ud say that there was a wrong to you in letting you be born? There's many a one might say it. But you won't listen to them?"

"Oh, no, I sha'n't listen to them."

Cecilia was comprehending vaguely. To be sure a girl whose mother was mad might. . . . Why, she had no right to marry any one.

She felt a sudden ache of desire that like the dove she might flee away and be at rest. There was the convent amid its green gardens, and the quiet faces of the nuns, and the one nun to whom she was deeply attached, Mother Margaret of the deep brown eyes and the pale face made up of spirit and intellect. If papa and mamma could only do without her! She was an only child; and Mother Margaret had said, when the other nuns had urged that she should give her voice to God, that God did not ask for only daughters. Still, papa and mamma were so much to each other—at least, mamma was so much to papa. Ciss had always had a certain aloofness from husband and child.

The thought brought her back to something Gran had said. What was it about papa not being sure if he had mamma's heart after all?

Gran's next words enlightened her.

"And the worst of it, dearie, was that they

were hardly man and wife before the gentleman came back that your mamma was promised to, came back alive and well. Those heathen blacks had only held him a prisoner, and he had escaped after all. A sorry homecomin' it was for him. I've heard tell that he was like a madman himself with the despair of it. But sure what could any one do? The knot was tied past untyin'. The first gray came into your father's hair that year. If he could have given her back he would. That was his way of love. And he used to think he'd cheated the poor lamb by reason of her innocence. It was a terrible heartbreak to him."

Cecilia understood. Of course the lover who had come back was Sir Paul Chadwick. She had a momentary vision of his distinguished person beside her father's. Papa always looked tired and dusty and somewhat heavily sad.

"And what did mamma say when she knew?"

"Why, she never knew, dearie. What was the good of bringin' it all up again? She was as happy as the day was long. She never seemed to remember the old life at all, except when her ladyship used to visit her, and then she was upset and strange for days after. That's what made me give her ladyship the

hint to stay away. It was only upsettin' her."

"Oh! And mamma never knew that her old lover came back?"

"No one ever told her. You've seen the change in her, Cecilia. It was what the doctors said that with peace and a happy life she might come right in time. What's the use of tellin' her now? 'Tis over and done with twenty years ago, and she's never wanted any one but your father. . . ."

"She never would want any one," Cecilia broke in eagerly.

Gran narrowed her old eyes till they were no more than a gleaming line between the yellow lids.

"That's as may be, dearie; that's as may be. I believe in lettin' well alone. I was against you goin' there because it would rake it all up again. You won't want to go back to them, now you know the truth?"

"I shall never want to go back to them," said Cecilia, with a wail in her voice.

Gran nodded her head triumphantly.

"Ah, that's right," she said, "that's right. You're your father's child as well as your mother's. And listen, dear lamb—by and by —there's a good and clever lad that wants to marry you—if you could think of him. He's very well thought of. There's some that says they don't know where he mightn't end."

“Oh no, no!” said Cecilia, with a shudder. “Not Bernard Grace. I’d rather die than marry Bernard Grace. I’d rather die than let him touch me.”

“Hoity toity!” said Gran, with an air of offense. “I don’t like such notions, Cecilia, I really don’t. A handsome fellow like Bernard, with all the girls mad about him! Bernard would never be the one to cast anything in your teeth or to think the worse of you because your mother used to be a bit strange.”

She tied her bonnet-strings with hands that trembled with anger. Her cab came up the little drive and stopped with a rattle at the door.

“Good-by, Cecilia,” she said, “good-by—may the Lord give you better sense!”

Then something in Cecilia’s face melted her heart.

“Never mind, dear lamb, never mind; you’re over-young,” she said. “Over-young to be talking about marriage this many a day. There, Cecilia, there, your old Gran’s not angry with you.”

So they parted on the note of reconciliation.



## CHAPTER XVI

### A BRIDE FROM THE SEA

AFTER that interview with Gran, Cecilia took to watching papa's face surreptitiously. She saw how sharpened it had become with care and anxiety. During the years that had elapsed since his marriage, suffering, like a sculptor, had been at work on Maurice Grace's face, remodeling it, altering its humble destiny to something of dignity and even power. It had been a lumpish, insignificant face even to the comprehending before he had married Cecily Shannon. Now at forty-eight years of age he was certainly not insignificant.

What a grief, Cecilia thought to herself, what a grief! What a harassing care! To have held his wife's love all these years, but as proxy for another man, dreading, as he might well dread, that she might ever come face to face with that other.

One day he surprised Cecilia at her scrutiny. He had taken an afternoon off work and Cecilia and he had gone down to Bray. Ciss had refused to accompany them. There was a great violinist performing that afternoon at a

concert, and Ciss was determined to hear him. She had bidden them go and enjoy themselves without her, she would be happy in her own way.

It was one of the things of which her husband had no understanding, the love of music which was so strong in Ciss, which she had transmitted to her daughter. He had accompanied her to concerts many times when he would rather have been at home resting or reading, and had not complained. But he had fallen fast asleep one night at a Wagner concert, and after that Ciss had left him at home, refusing his offers to escort her with her light laugh. Despite his love of being at his wife's side, Maurice Grace breathed more freely when he was permitted to stay at home in peace, instead of being called on to delight in some babel of sounds which seemed to enrapture Ciss, but had no meaning for him.

They were out on the Head with the sky above them, and the purple heather round about them. Below was the hoarse sound of the sea in its advance and withdrawal, sapping and mining eternally at the great face of the Head. Gulls swooped and screamed about them, overhead a lark hung poised in mid-air, his song and he ascending in a quiet rapture.

It was such a surcease from daily work as

Maurice Grace loved. It was so good to get away from diseased bodies, too often the expression of sick souls, for once in a way, and to lie quiet, with one of the two he loved best, at the breast of Nature. He drank deep draughts of the beauty and peace, lying at full length on the heather, his hands clasped beneath his head, the peak of his soft cap pulled over his eyes. There was not a human creature within sight or hearing.

"Cecilia," he asked suddenly, "why have you taken to watching me of late? I have surprised you several times, and you have always been quick to look away."

"Have I been watching you?" she stammered. He had raised himself on his elbow as he asked the question, and was looking her in the eyes. It was impossible for her to prevaricate or to conceal her embarrassment.

"Yes, you have taken to watching me. More, Cecilia, since you have been away from us, even more since you have come back, I see a change in you." He sighed quietly to himself. "It is inevitable, I suppose," he went on, "that our children should change, but I wish you could have kept your childhood a little longer. What is it, Cecilia?"

"It is only that"—it was easier for Cecilia to reveal one side of her secret thoughts than the other—"it is only that—Gran told me the

other night the story of how you and mamma came to marry."

"Ah, she told you that! She might have left it a little longer. How much did she tell you?"

Cecilia blushed. It seemed odd to talk to papa about such things.

"She told me how much you loved mamma from the beginning, when you saw her at church, and of mamma's delusion that you were her dead lover, and of how she came to you, and how you married her to save her from perhaps being shut away in an asylum."

"Ah, she told you everything."

He lay back again on the heather and covered his eyes.

"Then there is nothing left for me to tell you," he said, after a time. "Only, that if it were to do over again I would do it. It has been worth it all—though for years—you will understand this better one day than you do now—it was hard. It was like the man in the story who married the bride from the sea. My bride was always listening to the echoes from some other world in her own heart. And I had my way to make. It was a stiff, upward climb. Child, I have never spoken of these things except to God. It was a stiff climb—lack of early education, of social training, of looks, of rank, told against me as well as a

natural slowness of mind. If I have succeeded in spite of it all it was due to your mother. My love for her was my spur. Yet it was hard, at times, for a doctor climbing painfully and slowly, with a wife from the sea who listened to the voices of another world."

Cecilia bent down and kissed one of the gray locks that showed under her father's cap.

"I am sure it was hard," she said; "but it was wonderful. I am so proud to have a father like you, papa."

He opened his eyes and looked at her.

"So, Cecilia," he said softly. "Yet I have had my doubts of the fairness to you. It is lonely for a child to have had a mother from the sea."

"I wouldn't change mamma any more than you would. She has always been so sweet, always, always. And of late she has been coming back to us. Haven't you seen it, papa? She has become more like other people. Don't you see, papa, that she is different, more human?"

"Yes," he said; "but supposing that that means for you and me, Cecilia, that she will hear the call of her kin more plainly? My poor Ciss, she has been living in an alien world indeed for many a year. She has been wonderfully sweet. When was she ever anything but exquisitely sweet? It was a queer world

in which she declined from Lady Dromore to Mrs. Patrick Grace. And the patients! The patients would call on your mother. I had a very middle-class practice. The wives and daughters of all the shopkeepers about Westland Row called on my wife. My poor Ciss! I believe she even tried to wrestle with the housekeeping difficulty; but it brought on such headaches that I had to forbid it. We were at the mercy of one slattern after another. Occasionally your grandmother swept down on us and cleared the reigning slattern out. Then awful things came to light in the kitchen regions. I wonder you ever grew up, Cecilia. I wonder I didn't die of Dublin typhoid. One slattern succeeded another. We were always in hot water. And my poor Ciss looking like an angel through it all!"

He laughed ruefully. Cecilia remembered something of the misery of those early days, when Nannie D'Arcy kept the nursery in a state of siege against the beleaguering kitchen, and received all her supplies for her child from outside, cooking them with her own hands—the squalid days of dirt and discomfort before they went to live at the White Cottage, and Nannie's sister Kate, newly become a widow, was installed as cook and housekeeper.

"Poor papa!" she said softly, kissing again the gray lock.

"Oh, it wasn't so bad," he said dreamily. "There was always your mother. Have I been complaining? Why, I wouldn't change my lot for any man's, having your mother, even by the tenure by which I held her."

"Papa," said Cecilia, suddenly, "after all those years—don't you think mamma no longer hears the voices, or at least that they could not draw her away from us? I have been watching her, and she seems to me a happy woman. Surely you have established yourself in all those years?"

He turned over on his side with a sigh. It was good to speak of his troubles after keeping them so long locked up in his breast; and to so understanding a listener. How fast Cecilia had been growing! Wonderful, wonderful! And only the other day she had been a child.

"You know, Cecilia," he said, "that her lover came back?"

"Yes, I know that."

"He has never married—for her sake, I believe. He was heart-broken at his loss of her. My poor Ciss—he was gay, young, handsome, distinguished, rich—in everything my antithesis. He is handsome and distinguished-looking still. What a contrast!"

Cecilia glanced at her father. He had put on a shabby, comfortable suit of clothes for

greater ease. He looked gray and dusty and tired. She had a memory of another man of his age, his alert, quick glances, his fine distinguished figure and bearing, his air of fine gentleman that carried off the roughest clothes.

“Papa,” she said, “I know Sir Paul Chadwick. When Gran told me the story, I remembered things that I had heard and knew that it was he to whom mamma was engaged. I know him—and yet, papa, I would”—she stopped, suddenly conscious of her own daring; then went on again—“I would put the matter to the test. I have no doubt at all in my own mind of mamma. Let her and Sir Paul Chadwick come face to face and set your mind at rest for ever.”

He sat bolt upright, startled by the suggestion.

“You advise heroic measures, Cecilia,” he said.

“Because the doubt has been fretting you all those years. I believe you have suffered uselessly.”

“That may be so,” he responded slowly. “There have been times indeed when the doubt has so exhausted my strength to bear it that I would have almost welcomed the certainty that I was a usurper in your mother’s heart. Strange that a child like you should give me

such counsel. I have been a coward all those years."

"No," she said, "I think not. You had to wait for mamma to be well again, so that she would understand. And the opportunity is likely to come, for Sir Paul Chadwick spoke of seeing me when he came to Dublin. He has no doubts, apparently."

She blushed, remembering something else, but her father was not looking at her. She sighed because she feared what Sir Paul Chadwick might have to say.

"I suppose no one would in their seven senses, after twenty years. When things matter so much one is not in one's seven senses."

A couple of tourists with knapsacks on their backs came up the cliff-path, and flung themselves on the heather a few yards away. Their solitude was over.

Father and daughter got up half-reluctantly and went down the hill to Bray. They walked along the Esplanade to the International Hotel for tea. It was served to them in the lounge, which was dim after the bright light on the sea outside.

While they sat waiting for it, talking quietly, a tall man who had been writing at a table with his back to them stood up and came to-

wards their corner, wearing an air of pleased recognition.

“It is Miss Grace—Cecilia!” he said. “I thought I recognized the voice.”

The two men looked at each other steadily for an instant: it might be with a look as though they measured swords.

The coincidence of the meeting was overwhelming. With the easy readiness of the young and devout to believe in the divine interposition in our affairs, Cecilia said to herself that God had brought them together.

“My father, Sir Paul Chadwick,” she said, introducing the two men.

“How fortunate I am to meet you,” Sir Paul said, in his musical, well-bred voice. “I was in fact, coming to see you this afternoon. Lady Dromore gave me your address. I am here for a few days.”

He smiled at Maurice Grace. In his mind plainly there was no feeling about the past, the jealousy and resentment of old had plainly disappeared long ago, and now he looked at the old rival with friendly interest because he was Cecilia’s father.

“And Mrs. Grace?” he said. “I hope she is quite well?”

Cecilia could not forbear a quick glance at her father. Surely he would see now what a phantom fear he had harbored all those years.

Lady Dromore had sent Sir Paul Chadwick, despite the old love-affair between him and Ciss: he himself was plainly oppressed by no shadow of the past. Would not her father see it in the same way? For the moment she forgot that she might have to say no to Sir Paul Chadwick, whose wooing would be almost as unwelcome as Bernard Grace's, because she loved another man.

Maurice Grace had an oddly tense, oddly rigid look. He was glad as one is when a great ordeal, long foreseen, has to be met at last, a fiery trial to be encountered. Since it must come it is well that it has come, without the long, weary climbing the hill towards it any more.

"My wife is quite well, thank you," he said. "Will you not join us at tea? Afterwards we shall be returning home, and it will be a pleasure if you will come with us. We had planned to take the train to Killiney and walk."

"Ah, yes, that will be excellent," Sir Paul assented, sitting down at the little table. "Only you must be my guests for tea. I am staying in the hotel."

The waiter answered his summons obsequiously. He had been in no hurry to wait upon Maurice Grace and Cecilia.

While he gave his orders, Maurice Grace sat and stared, half without knowing it, at a

mirror on the opposite wall. It reflected their group at the little table. He saw himself and his rival contrasted, painfully, pitifully. How would Ciss see it? In an hour or so at most the moment dreaded all those years would have come. He would see Ciss's thoughts in her candid face. Would her soul, newly awake after those more than twenty years, go back to the point at which it had passed into slumber? Or would the kindness, the care, the tender associations of the twenty dreaming years plead his cause?

He stood up and moved to the other side of the table, where he could not see the mirror.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE MOMENT COMES AND PASSES

IT was a jarring incident for them all to find Bernard Grace seated in Ciss's little white drawing-room, wearing a four-square air as though he did not mean to leave it.

Ciss might come in at any moment. Her train already was due. Her husband had a thought of going to meet her, to prepare her for this visitor from the other world; but no, she had better be taken by surprise. Better know his fate at once. The first glance at Ciss's face as she recognized the old lover would set his doubts at rest for ever in one way or another. He must have his doubts set at rest—in one way or another. Now that he had come to the moment he was fierily impatient to know the best or the worst. He could not endure another hour of uncertainty. He wondered how he could have waited all those years in ignorance.

Finding the unwelcome visitor in the little room so redolent of his wife's fragrant presence was something oddly intolerable. Bernard sat with his two kid-gloved hands resting on

his stick, his obstinate chin on his hands. He was wearing his hat, another intolerable thing to Maurice Grace at the moment. It irked him that a kinsman of his own should show his lack of elementary good manners before the man whose place he had taken, who, if he had had his rights, would now be Ciss's husband.

Cecilia had waited to glance at a letter which lay waiting for her on the hall-table while the two men went into the drawing-room. There was a fire on the hearth; Ciss loved fires, and would have them all seasons of the year; and the firelight shone on the fire-brasses, on the frame of a mirror, on the gilt backs of books in a tall Sheraton bookcase; it lit warmly the white curtains, the white sofa on which Ciss loved to recline, the thousand and one prettinesses of the room. There was a scent of autumn violets conflicting with the sharp sea-sweetness that came in through the open window. Oddly incongruous with the daintiness was Bernard Grace.

Maurice Grace did not introduce the two men. He felt furious against Bernard for being there at so inopportune a moment. The special form the injury took was Bernard's wearing his hat in Ciss's room, the unlicked cub!

He gave the curtest of greetings to the intruder and turned away. Would the fellow

see that he wasn't wanted and go? Bernard didn't seem to see it. He wasn't curious even about the visitor with the distinguished presence as he would have been ordinarily. He nodded to Maurice Grace as curtly as he had been nodded to.

"I came to see Cecilia," he said.

Sir Paul Chadwick turned and looked at him. Cecilia's name spoken so easily by such a one was something of a shock to him. Why should Cecilia be at the beck and call of such as Bernard Grace?

"Where is Cecilia?"

"She came in with us. I suppose she has gone to take off her hat."

"She needn't do that." Bernard Grace stood up suddenly and made for the door. "I want to talk to her. I can do it as well outside the house as within."

"Don't keep her out too long. Bring her back while it is light."

Sir Paul Chadwick listened with a growing expression of displeased surprise. Who was this person who could have Cecilia's company when he desired it, so long as he did not keep her out after dark? He turned his back and walked to the window, from which he looked out on Dalkey Island and the Sound, and Howth beyond them, all steeped in the evening gold, without being aware of their beauty.

Meanwhile, Cecilia, meeting Bernard Grace in the doorway, recoiled from him with an overwhelming sense of annoyance. His presence at such a moment was little less than a misfortune. At all hazards he must be got rid of. It was not to be thought of that he should be present at the meeting between her mother and Sir Paul Chadwick. And at any moment might come Ciss's light foot on the doorstep, and the tapping with her fingers on the door, by which she announced her arrival to her husband or her daughter.

"What do you want?" she asked, with a harshness very unusual in her.

"I want to see you. There is something I must talk to you about. Something has happened. Come out with me, since you seem to have visitors, where we can talk quietly."

She sprang at the suggestion. Anything to get him out of the way just now. She had meant to efface herself. No one was to look on at that moment, except the three who must take part in it. The necessity was so urgent that she lost sight of her personal feeling about Bernard Grace.

"Very well," she said. "Anything you have to say to me may as well be said out of doors."

She was listening with the ears of a hare for the sound of her mother's footstep.

She put on her hat which she had just taken off, and, opening the door, led the way down the steps and across the little sandy lawn to the gate which opened on the road. Sir Paul Chadwick heard and saw them go, for he had left the window that overlooked the sea for the one that looked to the mountains. He frowned as he saw them go with that air of intimacy.

“Your daughter is very like her mother,” he said, turning to Maurice Grace.

“Yes; she is not the least little bit in the world a Grace,” the father responded, with a slight bitterness.

“And the . . . the . . . youth?”

It was not easy for Sir Paul Chadwick to show curiosity of this kind; but he felt that he wanted to know what there could be between Cecily’s daughter and the young bounder, as he mentally called Bernard Grace.

“The youth is a cousin of my own and a cousin therefore of Cecilia’s. He is not a bad youth, though he is too sure of himself. He has been brought up to be too sure of himself. The folly of an adoring mother. . . .”

Sir Paul’s face relaxed from its disapproval. To be sure Cecilia ought not to be at a cousin’s beck and call, when he happened to be such an objectionable person; but still, cousinship

went some way towards explaining the intimacy which was so distasteful to him.

He still stared from the window, and while he looked Ciss came in by the little gate. Having known Cecilia he was prepared for Ciss; but even so he felt his heart-strings tighten as she came towards the house, smiling up at the window as though she expected to see a welcoming face there.

She was wearing white, with a black lace scarf draped about her shoulders; on her golden hair was a wide black hat beneath which her fair face shone out radiantly. She was not the Cecily he had known, but she was that Cecily grown to wifehood and motherhood: "as the full bud becomes the perfect flower;" matronhood and the years had given Ciss a gracious roundness and amplitude. She was a creature of soft flowing lines from her head to her feet, not the slender, immature Cecily he remembered.

He drew back into the shadow of the muslin curtains.

"It is Mrs. Grace," he said, turning to Cecily's husband; but Maurice Grace had gone out into the hall to open the door for Ciss. For the moment Maurice Grace was a little frightened. Ought Ciss to be prepared? Would it not be a shock coming face to face with the old lover she believed to be dead. He

did not know that she knew Paul Chadwick to be living.

He heard her three little taps upon the door before he could open it, then her key in the lock. He remembered now that she had said she would take the latch-key, lest they should not be back before she returned, and Nannie and Kate be too busy in the back premises to hear the faint tinkle which was all the door-bell could do by way of ringing.

“Well, my darling,” he said as they came face to face.

Ciss fluttered down upon him two or three of her light, soft kisses, which had a way of falling like rose-leaves upon his face.

“So you have got back before me,” she said. “*What* an afternoon! I should have envied you if I had not been listening to the Ring. It was wonderful. But I do want my tea.”

“Ciss,” he said, detaining her, “a very old friend has come to see you, one you have not heard of for years.”

“Edith Dromore,” she said, with shining eyes, breaking away from him in her eagerness to see her visitor. “I have been dreaming that I saw her.”

“Not Lady Dromore, Ciss,” he answered, intercepting her in the narrow passage; “not Lady Dromore. You remember Sir Paul Chadwick?”

"Sir Paul Chadwick! Yes, I remember Cecilia told me about him. We thought once that he was dead."

"But you are glad he is alive?"

"Ah, yes, I am glad," she said. He felt rather than saw her shudder. "It would have been such a horrible death, poor Paul! They ought to have told me long ago. These things cause nightmares."

She pushed past him gently and entered the little drawing-room. He had an absurd feeling that he ought to let them meet alone, like lovers long parted, but he reminded himself that it was all over and done with more than twenty years ago. For twenty years Ciss had been his own. Surely that possession of his had become reality, and all the rest mists and shadows?

He seemed to have been a long time deliberating with himself, yet he followed Ciss closely into the drawing-room. Sir Paul Chadwick had turned from the window, and was looking at Ciss as though she were a ghost. It was strange to see Cecily again, although he had ceased to suffer for her. She went towards him, the evening gold shining coldly on her face and hair. She was reflected in the little, round mirror above the fireplace. The pale light flooded her face and glowed even in the depths of her eyes.

"Why, Paul!" she said, "Paul! And so you came back safe and sound? Why didn't some one tell me long ago? It was cruel not to let me know. It was a fear and a terror through all the happy years of my married life the thought of what had happened to you. I thought you were dead till I knew from Cecilia that you lived. Some one ought to have told me."

She had taken his two hands and was looking up into his face.

"You are really like a man come back from the dead, Paul," she said, "and I am so glad to see you. Did you know I was married? This is my husband. Of course you have met. And you know my girl, too. Where is Cecilia, Maurice?"

Maurice Grace was looking on like a man in a dream. Was this the moment he had dreaded all these years, the moment which he had not dared to face till his young daughter had spurred him on to it?

Ciss was looking back at him and her expression had nothing but pure love and pride in it. She relinquished her clasp of Paul Chadwick's hands, and thrust an arm through her husband's.

"And are you married, Paul?" she asked.

He shook his head.

"Ah, I am sorry for that," said Ciss with

a wise air. "You must marry; it is the happiest thing. Where are you staying? And how is dear, beautiful Arlo? Cecilia, happy girl, was there. And have you been to the House of Dromore lately? I have not seen Edith for ages. Only this summer I met Betty—a dear girl. My Cecilia has been staying with them. But, of course, you know that. Cecilia wrote to me about you. At first I didn't know whether I had only dreamed that you were dead."

Sir Paul listened, his head bent. He understood that it had been thought wiser not to talk of him to Ciss. Poor Cecily, his feeling for her had been purged of passion long ago. He was glad that she could be happy with her low-born husband; glad that he was a good fellow and gentle by nature, since he was poor Cecily's husband.

Nannie D'Arcy brought the tea and Ciss sat at the table and made it and poured it out. The low sun was in her hair and lay on her face, revealing it smooth and unlined as a child's face. Ciss had escaped suffering. Even in that fiery trial long ago her mind had fallen asleep. She looked as though she must have slept through the years, so lightly had they touched her.

She chattered like a happy child over the teacups. There were so many things she

wanted to know. She complained that after the first letters Cecilia had had little to tell her about the House of Dromore.

And presently the dark was in the room. Sir Paul Chadwick had drunk his tea and had suggested going; but Ciss had urged him to stay, looking always to her husband to ratify the invitation. The dark was in the room, and he began to wonder with a certain heat and indignation where Cecilia could be with the young bounder. What were Cecily and her husband about to allow their beautiful young daughter to go wandering with her bounder cousin in the dark? Would she ever come in? He found himself listening for Cecilia's feet running up the little flight of steps as he had heard Cecily's. He had been used to have a strange, sweet feeling about Cecily, the girl he had loved, who had loved him so well that her grief at his supposed death had caused the undoing of their love. But this was another Cecily, this one who seemed set apart from him in the sanctities of wifehood and motherhood, sanctities into which he could not enter. In this happy, satisfied Cecily he had no part.

Maurice Grace was very silent; but then he was seldom talkative, and Ciss talked enough for all three. He sat with his eyes shining under their drooped lids. In the midst of

Ciss's chatter he stood up and walked to the window. He felt oddly light—light-headed, light-hearted, light-footed—as though the burden of the years had fallen away from him. The moment had come and passed which had cast its shadow over his married happiness. Was it possible? Was it possible? There had always been a cloud between him and the good sun. And now to think how it had drifted away, like the merest breath of mist of a summer morning! Ciss's chatter came to him as from somewhere far off. He could not realize yet that the moment had come and passed, that Ciss was his and not her handsome, aristocratic first lover's. Ciss's eyes had been candid. She had looked at him as she had never looked before. Ciss awake had ratified the choice of Ciss asleep.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### DON QUIXOTE

CECILIA walked away from the house by Bernard Grace's side, her thoughts too full of the meeting that was about to happen to leave very much room for him. Glancing at him as they walked, in a wonder at his unwonted silence, she was struck by the gloom of his expression. So, with a look of trouble and perplexity in his handsome, florid face, he was much less intolerable than in his self-satisfied, egotistical moods. She felt reassured, too, as to his intentions: whatever they might be he was not going to thrust his love-making upon her.

They turned down by the entrance of the fishermen's harbor on to the little pier where the fish were flung ashore in shining masses when the boats came in. The place was empty and deserted now, except for one or two boats which rocked idly by the pier; the fishermen were out laying their lines, and there was not a creature in view.

She sat down on the stone post to which

the boats were made fast when they came alongside.

“Well,” she asked, “what did you wish to see me about?”

“I’m sorry I bothered you the other day,” he said, almost humbly. “I’d been led to believe you’d a kindness for me. People are mistaken sometimes, you know.”

Was this Bernard Grace? Was it possible? He lifted his eyes and looked at Cecilia; she saw anxiety in them and something of shame. What on earth had happened to make him like this?

“Never mind,” she said, feeling unwontedly kind to him. “It was a mistake. I’ve no kindness for any one, not in the way you mean.”

“Not that fellow, that lord that was so confoundedly impudent to me?”

“I’ve no kindness for any one in the way you mean,” she repeated.

“Ah, well. I never could bear to be beaten by any one. He pushed himself between you and me. I’m not the one to kowtow to a lord, and I wouldn’t be put down by him if he was a lord twenty times over. However, it isn’t of him I came to speak. I’ve got into trouble—worse than that, I’ve got some one else into trouble. I thought you could help me, maybe.”

He looked at her shamefaced, and Cecilia liked him better than she had ever liked him in the days of his overweening prosperity.

"What is it, Bernard?" she asked in a voice dangerously soft. "I will help you if I can."

The blood came darkly into his cheek.

"It is—Irene Tollemache," he said. "I've been playing the fool with her, and the poor little girl got fond of me. If you'd only have looked at me, Cecilia, perhaps it wouldn't have happened. But I'd always that joking way with girls. I never could let them alone, and," he bridled a little, "if I could they wouldn't let me alone. I didn't mean anything with Irene, but she took it seriously. She's only a baby, and, being English, she doesn't understand that an Irishman doesn't always mean all he says to a girl. She took every humbugging word I said for gospel. She's head over ears in love with me. Worse, my mother knows about it. She caught us together—it was my fault—after every one was in bed. I'd persuaded Irene to come down and sit with me while I smoked my pipe. I seemed never to get a chance of a word or a kiss, the mother was always on the prowl. She doesn't know what she says when her temper's up. Poor little Irene! She didn't understand half what was said to her. She was like a poor little flower lashed by the wind

and the rain. She stood there trembling, and I thought she was going to faint. The ways of women are queer. My mother never said a word to me. I was her innocent boy, that poor little Irene—Irene, mind you!—had inveigled and led astray."

He took out his handkerchief and wiped his forehead. He had the look of one who recalls some horrible thing gone over, and yet there was an air of grim humor in the concluding words.

"I can't tell you half how bad it was, Cecilia," he went on. "My mother—never mind—she is my mother after all. Poor little Irene!"

"And what did you do, Bernard Grace?" flashed Cecilia, turning to him suddenly. "What did you do when that storm fell upon the girl?"

"What did I do?" he repeated, a little sullenly. Even now he was not so humble that Cecilia could hector or lecture him. "What do you suppose I did? Am I to be brow-beaten by a woman, even my own mother? I put my arms about the poor little thing and told the mother outright I was going to marry her. . . ."

"Ah, I am glad you did that," Cecilia said, her face clearing. "But had you asked her? Irene, I mean. Would she be willing?"

“Would a duck swim?” asked Bernard, with a smile which for the moment made Cecilia feel the old detestation for him. “I never meant to do it, Cecilia. I was only having my fun. I never thought seriously of any girl but you. But now I suppose I’m let in for it.”

He did not seem as though he minded very much—being let in for it.

“You should have seen Irene’s face as she looked up at me when I spoke. Poor little Irene! You see, other girls can value what you throw away, Cecilia.”

Cecilia looked at him again and a great sweetness was in her expression.

“I’m glad you stood up for the poor little thing,” she said. “And, after all, your mother will come round. Miss Tollemache belongs to a very good family, does she not?”

“Her father’s cousin to an earl,” Bernard Grace said proudly. “I think a deal of that, Cecilia, and so would you. I always liked a choice article, as you know. But it won’t go down with my father and mother. I’ll have a stand-up fight with them over it. I’m glad Irene’ll be out of it. Lord, what a woman’s tongue is when she lets it go! My mother never thought much of Irene, she being poor and the nuns training her for a governess. She liked her being with the girls because of

the English accent. She hoped they'd catch it from her. A beggar's a beggar, she says, even if there is a lord in the family. 'Much good it did Maurice Grace,' she says, 'to have a lord for his wife's cousin.' "

Cecilia smiled faintly.

"And what do you want me to do, Bernard?" she asked.

"I would have asked your mother if I had seen her. You will ask her for me. Will your mother take in Irene for me till I can settle something about our marriage?"

"I am quite sure she will." All of a sudden Cecilia felt that she liked Bernard Grace and was ready to become his champion. "Where is Irene now?"

"I didn't dare leave her with the mother, so as soon as the morning came and she could pack her poor little trunk, I took her off to Fan. Fan and I were always friends. My mother would have turned her out last night if I wasn't there to interfere. Fan's terrified lest the mother should know she's there. I told Fan to hide her if the mother came along. 'Is it hide her from my mother?' said Fan, 'why, she'd rout the house from top to bottom if she thought I was hiding anything on her.' I left Fan trembling, afraid the mother'd come along. I told her in case she saw her coming to let Irene slip out by the garden

and keep away till my mother was gone. I wouldn't have her and poor Irene meet without myself being there for a good deal, I tell you. The mother's mad against you, too, Cecilia."

"But why?"

The old self-satisfied smile returned to his face for a fleeting instant.

"When she thinks of the fortunes I might have married only for you. There are the Higginses. Old Jim Higgins made twenty thousand pounds out of the pawnbroking, and only Nora and Katty to divide it among. And there is Miss Shea, that's heiress to half a dozen public-houses, and Rose Hennessy, and twenty others, all girls with fortunes. I never cared for money. I always had a taste for the choice article."

"Ah, well, Irene's very sweet. You will want mamma to shelter her as soon as possible."

"If she consents I could bring her down to-night." He consulted his watch. "Twenty-five past six. I could have her here by ten o'clock."

"I do not know if it will be possible to-night; but I shall try."

A wave of sharp anxiety came over her to know what had happened at the momentous meeting between Ciss and her old lover. If

all was well then she could plead with confidence for Irene and poor Bernard, who was proving to be so much better than she had expected. But if things were not well for papa; if mamma was going to be unhappy because the lover out of her own world lived after all, it would be an unpropitious moment to ask them to saddle themselves with Bernard's troubles.

"Irene might have gone back to the convent to her aunt," she said. "Why did you not think of that?"

"I did think of it. But I don't want my mother going to make scenes at the convent. How could I tell what she'd be up to? I've spoked her wheel there, I think. I went to the convent from leaving Irene with Fan. I saw the Reverend Mother; she was in a terrible state about it. They wanted me to bring her straight back there, but I thought I'd like her to be with my own people till we could be married, and in the end the Reverend Mother agreed. Do you know, Cecilia, I thought she wasn't over-pleased about the marriage, but it isn't likely, is it? Nothing but my marriage will stop my mother's tongue, if that will. She's capable of saying the things she said to poor Irene to any one. I had a fear she might find out the address of Irene's father and write to him. Reverend Mother won't let her have

it, and she has no way of finding it out by herself."

"Come home with me," Cecilia said. "You shall plead your own cause with mamma and papa. I am sure they will help you."

They walked back to Glan-na-Tore. By this time the sun had dropped below the horizon, and cheerful lights were springing up in the house fronts and in the street lamps. The wind came coolly off the sea on which the dark had settled down. The revolving light on Howth flashed and was dark.

"I shall not be able to rest until I have left Irene under your roof," said the lover. "We can be married in a week by special license. I've got it here." He touched the breast-pocket of his coat. "Then I shall take Irene to her father and we will tell him all about it."

"You think that will be best?"

"I think I can persuade him to forgive us. I had always a persuasive tongue. He is blind, you know, and very poor. Irene would like him to live with us. As I say to her, Mount Auburn is large enough."

Mount Auburn was the great, old, ramshackle mansion, once belonging to an Irish peer, which was on the farm some miles down the country that Patrick Grace had purchased for his first-born.

“Irene will be as happy as a queen at Mount Auburn,” he went on. “I never knew such a girl for the country and a garden. And she will have the old man to keep her company when I’m away at fairs and markets. I’m going to stick close to work and leave politics to better men; you see I sha’n’t have so much money to play with if my father turns rusty, as he may. Luckily he can’t take back Mount Auburn.”

Why, it was excellent, Cecilia thought. Mount Auburn would be quite far enough away for Irene to be beyond any but the most infrequent visits from her mother-in-law, whose predilections were for town, and not for country, when she took her walks abroad. And it was quite possible Irene might do something yet with Bernard. That saying of his about leaving politics to better men was a bewilderment to Cecilia. When had Bernard ever acknowledged any man as his better?

On a sudden impulse she turned to him.

“I’ll do my very best for you and Irene,” she said. “Irene is charming, refined, gentle, and a lady. Irene is better than money.”

“Don’t I know it?” he said humbly. “She’s far beyond me. I’ve been learning, Cecilia. The trouble of the last few hours has brought it home to me. I’m not good enough for Irene. I wasn’t good enough for you. I wonder how

I ever had the impudence to lift my eyes to you."

It was a mood that could hardly be expected to last as against the good opinion of himself which had grown up with Bernard; but at least it was evidence of a possibility of saving grace in Bernard. Bernard might safely be left to Irene.

Arrived at Glan-na-Tore, Cecilia left Bernard in the little breakfast-room, which was at the other side of the hall, till she could tell Ciss the thing he needed.

She entered the drawing-room with a beating heart for what she might find. For a second or two she could see nothing. Then the mist cleared from off her eyes. Her father smiled at her across the lamplight, a smile of happy reassurance. Sir Paul Chadwick was standing by the mantel-piece. Ciss, in a low chair, had evidently been chattering in a way to amuse her audience.

She turned to Cecilia as she came in.

"Well, darling," she said, "so you have got back? What have you done with Bernard?"

Cecilia came and leaned over the back of her chair.

"He has something to tell you," she said in a half whisper. "He is waiting in the breakfast-room."

"Ah, something that can wait, I dare say.

You know my old friend Sir Paul Chadwick already. You have met him at the House of Dromore? It has been good for me to see him in the land of the living."

Ciss did not wait for an answer. She rattled along cheerfully, apparently in the highest spirits. Sometimes she spoke directly to her husband, and her manner to him said plainly that he was all a woman's heart could desire. There was an air of communion as she looked at him that spoke of a thousand tender intimacies.

"Bernard cannot wait," Cecilia said, interrupting Ciss's happy flow of talk. "He has something very important to tell you."

She looked up and her eyes met Sir Paul Chadwick's gaze, which had an amazed, shocked interrogation in it. To her intense discomfort she blushed hotly. What was he thinking about her?

"Well, I had better go and see what he wants," Ciss said, jumping up from her chair. "And do you, Cecilia, help us to persuade Sir Paul to stay to dinner. He acknowledges that he has no engagement. Why should he go back to dine at a hotel?"

But Sir Paul was obdurate. He was very glad to have met Mrs. Grace after all these years and to find her so well and so happy. But he feared he must go. He had letters to

write, business to attend to. His manner had an odd coldness as he shook hands with Ciss and Cecilia.

At last Cecilia was alone with her father.

“Well?” she said, “well?”

“You were quite right, Cecilia. She was glad to see him, glad to have him alive, as an old friend. But he matters nothing to her. You and I are everything. And to think how I have lived, dreading this meeting all those years. It was wasted suffering, Cecilia, if suffering is ever wasted.”

“And you and mamma are all in all to each other,” Cecilia said, her eyes shining.

“Mamma and I and you.”

She came and laid her cheek against his shabby coat-sleeve.

“It would not be so hard now if I were to leave you,” she said; and then she had a pang for the shadow that fell over his face in the hour of his joy.

“Oh no, no; we could not do without you, Cecilia,” he said hastily. “What do you mean, child? Your grandmother spoke of you and Bernard Grace; but I would not listen to her. I said that I looked higher than Bernard Grace for my girl. It is not possible. . . .”

“Of course it is not. You may go on looking higher. Poor Bernard is at this moment asking mamma to help him in his love-affairs.

It is that little Miss Tollemache who is at school with his sisters. She is English and a lady, and in love with Bernard." She could not keep the scornful incredulity out of her voice. "She is very young, of course, and very poor. And, wonder of wonders, she has made Bernard humble. He wants us to take her in. His mother has turned her out. *She* looks higher for Bernard than a poor lady. They are to be married at once."

"Good heavens!" said Maurice Grace with enjoyment; "fancy Bernard as *Don Quixote*! That horrid mother of his! Of course we shall stand by him and the girl if it brings on us the enmity of the whole family. It will be a blow to your *Granny*."

He laughed softly to himself. He had the happiness, keen and fresh, of one newly escaped from a great fear and a great danger. He had forgotten the shadow which momentarily Cecilia's words had cast upon his joy. He watched the door for Ciss to come back, Ciss who was the light of his world, his light, of which henceforth he need not fear the eclipse.

## CHAPTER XIX

### CECILIA'S VOCATION

IT was one of the occasions when joy is to be felt. Maurice Grace was very silent that evening, but joy emanated from him, sat upon his serious face, wrapped him about like a garment. As they sat at dinner together, husband, wife, and child, he kept glancing from Ciss to Cecilia with a quiet radiance in his gaze as though they had been given back to him from the grave.

Could they do without her now that they were more than ever all in all to each other, Cecilia wondered. She had the old longing upon her to flee away like the dove and be at rest. The quiet coolness and greenery, the innocence and peace of Mount St. Mary's, beckoned to her like mirage to a thirsty traveler in the desert. There was a high corridor under the roof at Mount St. Mary's which they called the Rue Celeste. Above it rose an observatory tower, from which was a superb view of mountains and sea and grassy rolling plains. From it you could see sunsets and sun-

rises, and the glory of the stars at night spread a magnificent panorama.

On both sides of the corridor were small cells, containing each a small blue and white curtained pallet, one or two articles of furniture of unpainted deal, a single chair, and a little square of looking-glass in which a nun could see if her coif sat awry, but hardly her whole face. The walls were whitewashed, with a black and white crucifix for sole ornament. She thought of one of those little cells, its uncurtained window looking to the mountains or the sea, as a nest of peace. She said to herself that she was done with life, and she not yet twenty years old, because she had stolen Betty's lover and Betty was cold to her, not knowing that Cecilia would strip herself bare rather than clothe herself in the lightest of Betty's cast-off joys. She was impatient, being young, to find a short cut out of the entanglement in which she was innocently involved. If her father and mother could do without her and she could slip away into the convent, it would be an easy way out. Kilrush would return to his allegiance to Betty, and Betty and Lady Dromore would forget that Cecilia had ever brought a disturbing presence into the happiness of their lives. And poor Cecilia, who ought not to marry any man lest she should have inherited her mother's malady, would be

at rest, singing for God, living for God, with the human alleviation of Mother Margaret's tenderness for ever beside her. Mother Margaret's deep, spiritual brown eyes looked such love at Cecilia as a mother's eyes hold for her young daughter.

And to be sure they could do without her. Ciss, though always so gentle to Cecilia, had never seemed to find her essential to her life, and for all papa's fondness, any one could see that his great passion was for his wife. In this hour when they were like new-wed lovers they would hardly miss Cecilia.

The quietness of the evening was over when, about ten o'clock, Bernard Grace arrived with the shy and trembling Irene. The girl came stealing into the room, hiding herself behind Bernard's broad shoulders. Ciss went to meet her, kissed her, and drew her to the fire, exclaiming at the coldness of her hands. They warmed and comforted her, and fed her, till presently she ceased to shiver and a little color came into her pale, dark cheeks. Plainly she had been frightened out of her wits, and she turned to their kindness and protection in humble gratitude.

She was even ready to let Bernard go when he went at last unwillingly. Cecilia still wondered at Irene; but she was fain to confess that Bernard, as lover, had developed certain quali-

ties which she could not have believed him to possess. His fussiness over Irene would have been funny if it had not been touching. He had almost to be pushed out of the house to catch his last train. Love was working miracles for Bernard, although it was a love which had taken him unawares while he made a vulgar play of it. Bernard genuinely in love was no longer vulgar.

Cecilia carried the little thing off to the pretty spare room which was side by side with Cecilia's own. By Ciss's orders a fire had been lighted there; and the firelight lit up the bright little nest of a room with its chintz hangings and its pretty white furniture.

Irene warmed her fingers at the blaze as though she were still cold.

"Bernard told you?" she said, in a half-fearful whisper.

"Yes, he told me."

"How dreadful his mother was, how she threatened to turn me out? If he had left me a minute alone with her I should have died with fear. I didn't think any woman could be like that. Any one would think I had been wicked. I cannot tell you how I felt when Bernard put his arms round me and said I was going to be his wife. I hadn't thought of being his wife. I was so fond of him that I thought of nothing beyond seeing him and being with him."

Poor Irene! Cecilia could not understand this strange infatuation for Bernard. Verses of her dearest poet came to her mind.

“God be thanked! The meanest of His creatures  
Has two soul-sides, one to face the world with,  
One to show a woman when he loves her.”

and—

“Then out strode Gismond: then I knew  
That I was saved. I never met  
His face before, but at first view  
I felt quite sure that God had set  
Himself to Satan. Who would spend  
A minute’s mistrust on the end?”

To think of Bernard, *Bernard*, as a hero of romance in a girl’s fervid fancy! It was incredible; yet in Irene’s great swimming eyes as she lifted them to Cecilia’s face, the truth was evident.

Outside a wind had sprung up and the glorious evening had ended with sharp, sudden showers. The rain beat against the window, there was a steady turmoil in the air from the waves that broke against the rocks below. Now and again the siren from the lighthouse off Howth rose like the melancholy lowing of some great beast, and died away again.

“How good it is in here!” Irene said, with a look of passionate gratitude. Stooping impulsively she kissed Cecilia’s hand. The action

had the shy grace of a child's, and Cecilia's heart went out to the poor little waif.

"You will like it at Mount Auburn," she said. "It is a sweet old place with such a lovely walled garden, beautiful open country about it, and the mountains standing round it in a ring."

"I should be happy anywhere with Bernard," Irene said quickly; and there was a lilt in her voice that was like the song of a mating bird just beginning. "And I am so glad it is far away. She—Bernard's mother—said that it was at the back o' God speed; there was no way of getting at it without spending half the day on the road."

"And she detests driving," Cecilia said; "so she will not trouble you much."

She stirred the fire to a blaze, kissed Irene, and went off to her own room. She was glad that Irene had not discovered any want of responsiveness in her manner to the raptures about Bernard. To be sure she thought better of Bernard than she ever had before, although he had only done what any decent man in his place would have done. But she had not yet come to the point of accepting Bernard as a possible hero of romance.

In her own room, as she put away the dress she had worn in the afternoon, her fingers felt in the pocket the hard outline of a letter, the

letter which she had taken from the hall table as she entered the house with her father and Sir Paul Chadwick and had forgotten. A letter from Lady Dromore! How strange that even for a little while she should have forgotten it.

She laid the letter on one side while she said her prayers, her prayers of thanksgiving for the happiness which dwelt beneath the roof of their little seaside cottage that night, a prayer for all those dear to her, for Kilrush and Betty, that they might be happy together, for herself for help and guidance, for Bernard and Irene. While she knelt, her face pressed against the counterpane of her little white bed, she thought of Irene beyond the wall there, anticipating her earthly bridal with timid rapture; of herself, this side of the wall, desiring only the poor garments and narrow cell of the nun. To-morrow they would go a-trousseauing with Irene. Bernard had made a special point of it that his little bride should have everything as though she had been sped to her marriage with the utmost love and joy. And to-morrow—it was the time to speak—she herself would ask papa and mamma if they could spare her, in this hour of their joy, to the service of God.

While she prayed, her tears came and flowed in a torrent. She held herself close in

a panic lest her sobs should be heard. It would be good to be at peace, with Mother Margaret for dear friend and companion; in the little cell of the Rue Celeste, with the fine, stately old house and the gardens, and the meadow to make a boundary for her feet till the day she died. Yet she needs must weep for Cecilia, who had made such a little flight into the world and bruised her wings, as she would weep over the face of a dead girl who was gone to heaven after suffering upon earth.

When she stood up at last with a wet face and tired with her tears, she stretched out her hand for Lady Dromore's letter. She was greedy for news of them, too greedy for Cecilia who was going to be a nun, and so she had refrained her eyes from reading the letter till her prayers were said.

“**MY DEAREST CHILD**” (it began, with the old loving tenderness) :

“One of these days you will receive a visit from Sir Paul Chadwick, who has gone up to Dublin with the intention of seeing you. He has confided in me, Cecilia, and I have encouraged him to hope that the difference between your age and his need not be an insuperable barrier to his desire of winning you.

He was once in love with your sweet mother, and was deprived of her love by a succession of sad accidents. He has been faithful to her ever since, in so far as he has put no woman in the place she should have occupied. I have dreaded for him the shock of meeting your mother during these years; but the years *must* have brought forgetfulness to her as they have brought new hopes to him. He is kind and honorable and good, and the mistress of his heart and of Arlo will be an enviable woman. Can you think of it, my dearest child? I confess I desire it ardently, because it would bring you back to us, and make you in a sense one of us.

“Tell your mother that it is my dearest wish to welcome her and your father to the House of Dromore at the earliest possible moment at which they can pay us a visit.

“Kilrush is shooting partridges in Sussex. Betty ~~is~~ with Mrs. Chapman, at Kilkee; she was not quite the thing. Dromore has been troubled with the gout. We hear that Brian’s ship will return home from the China station next May, and we are all looking forward to seeing the boy. The others are well. Good news of Guy always. He is to be a wet bob next season. How glad we shall be if you decide that you can make Paul Chadwick

happy and come back to us to whom you really belong.

“With dearest love from all of us,  
“Yours most fondly,  
“EDITH DROMORE.”

Cecilia dropped the letter when she had read it. So that was what Sir Paul had come for. He had wanted to marry her. “No, no, no!” she cried, in a violent recoil from the idea. Why, he was as old as papa. How could Lady Dromore have thought that she would do it? To marry mamma’s old lover! No, no, no! she would marry no one: she had an aversion for the thought of the marrying, for the thought of a lover and a lover’s caresses. Was she not already in thought the bride of Christ and the Spouse of Heaven?

With the passionate distaste strong upon her she pulled out the little desk, which had been a present from papa on her sixteenth birthday, and sat down to write to Lady Dromore. She must let her know at once that the thing was impossible. She wrote half a dozen lines hastily and then pulled up short. She had been about to tell her that she had chosen the conventional life, then she changed her mind; papa might refuse his consent, he might tell her to wait till she was older. There was no

use spreading the news till the thing was settled. She read over what she had written.

“DEAREST COUSIN EDITH:

“I hope you will not be disappointed in me. I love you for all your kindness to me, and shall always love you. But I could not marry Sir Paul Chadwick. It is a great honor for me that he should wish to marry me, and I hope it will not grieve him. I have made another choice for my life—”

She had written so far. She hesitated now for a few moments with the pen held in her hand. Then she added some more.

“—which you shall hear of very soon. It has been in my mind for a long time more or less: it was there when I was with you. You must think of me as being very happy, although I cannot be at Arlo nor with you. Mamma is very happy, happier since she has seen Sir Paul Chadwick. She is very glad he lives and she adores papa. I hope they will come to you presently. I am very sorry that dear Betty has not been well. Give her my dear love. And forgive me that I cannot do what you want. All that has been settled for me for some time.”

She wanted Lady Dromore and Betty to

know that while she had been with them her fate was already decided, so that she could not have meant to take Betty's lover from her.

She closed the letter, addressed and stamped it before she went to bed, so that it might be posted early in the morning. But it was a long time before sleep came to her. She tried hard to fix her mind and soul upon the little cell in the Rue Celeste. But strive as she would the eyes and smile of Betty's lover would come before her gaze. The singing in the convent chapel, where presently she would lead the choir, could not fill her ears to the exclusion of the voice that had softened for her till every word seemed a caress.

“Lead us not into temptation!” prayed Cecilia, lying awake in the moonlight, and then fell to a terrified contemplation of herself in the veil and robe of a nun, with Kilrush’s face and voice and smile, the passionate glance of his dark eyes, coming between her and her missal and crucifix.

## CHAPTER XX

### BETTY'S FAIRING

SIR PAUL CHADWICK had returned to his hotel in a mood disturbed and displeased. On the one hand his meeting with Ciss had troubled the fountains of memory; on the other, he could not endure that her daughter should be on terms of obvious intimacy with "that shocking bounder," as he called Bernard Grace in his own mind.

He asked himself how much exactly did the intimacy convey, and was obliged to answer that it seemed to convey a great deal. Cecilia's going out with the young bounder; her return to her mother's side with the whispered information that Bernard had something to say; Ciss's leaving them for that interview with Bernard. Did it all connote a proposal, an acceptance, an approval? It was horrible, but it seemed probable enough. What a profanation! He was divided between the desire to rush back to Arlo in a burning rage, and the intention of remonstrating with Cecilia's parents on their giving their daughter to such a person as Bernard.

A night's sleep brought wiser counsel. When he awoke in the morning, the autumn sun lay warmly upon his bed; he had neglected to draw the blinds overnight. He lay in luxurious idleness for a while, before he rang the bell for his shaving water. It was not often he lay a-bed in the mornings. He still kept up the activities of youth, although he had given up his life of adventure. That had been a sacrifice to the memory of his happiness with Ciss. Lying this autumn morning in bed at the International he began to ask himself whether that passionate atonement had been needed after all. The love of his youth seemed to have found happiness without him.

How wonderfully Ciss had kept her beauty! Why, she was as beautiful as her daughter; some people would have said more beautiful. How radiant she had been! It struck him all at once that Cecilia had been eclipsed. Was it by reason of her mother's radiance? No, for Cecilia, coming in from the open air to that whisper with Ciss, had been almost as joyful as her mother. Yet when they had first met at the hotel, afterwards when they went back to Dalkey together, Cecilia had been eclipsed, a little thin and pale; there had been a sad droop at the corner of her mouth. She had not looked a girl happily in love.

Well, he was not going to be beaten by vague

surmise. After all, the young bounder was her cousin; there might be other reasons for the appearance of intimacy besides those which had come to his jealous mind. Cecilia had seemed to like him at the House of Dromore, at Arlo. Had he not heard her say that a girl might love him despite his nearly fifty years? He had been annoyed with Kilrush then, of course, because of the pathetic look in Betty Wynne's brown eyes when he hung about her cousin. But he had misunderstood perhaps. Betty was not a girl from whom a man could be easily detached. Betty could hold her own even against Cecilia.

He sprang out of bed with sudden energy and into his bath of sea-water. All the activity in his nature was awake. He would discover before giving up his purpose whether Cecilia was free to be wooed and won by him or another man. He said to himself that she was a prize worth striving for. And surely the things he had to give must outweigh that one quality of youth which the undesirable Bernard possessed as against him! He said to himself as he dressed that it was an enterprise, an adventure worth the doing, to snatch Cecilia out of the environment in which it was possible to think of her as engaged to a shocking young bounder.

Of course he could not descend on Glan-na-

Tore in the morning hours. But there were things he had to do in Dublin, many small commissions to be executed for himself and others, and there was his old friend McClellan to see. McClellan would lunch him, and in the afternoon he would go down to Glan-na-Tore and find out how matters were with Cecilia.

He had a long list of commissions to be executed for Lady Dromore, and for Lady Dromore's daughters. Some one to see about a new saddle for Lord Dromore. He could always be trusted to execute his commissions conscientiously, and there was a certain humor in the painstaking way in which he journeyed from shop to shop, now and again consulting his list to be sure that he omitted nothing.

He had been ordering a supply of wine from a Grafton Street shop, and as he crossed the street to the silk-mercers on the other side, he was held up momentarily by a string of outside cars. As they passed him, with no place between for even the hardiest pedestrian to dash through, he saw a couple of figures, "divinely tall"—who could they be but Ciss and Cecilia?—enter the wide door of the big shop. There was a little, insignificant person with them whom he quite overlooked.

He would have overtaken them if he could—he had a thought of giving them lunch—but

the street was blocked. Finally he made a détour round a post-office van and a half dozen bicycles, but the shop had swallowed up Ciss and Cecilia.

What matter? He would find them there—unless they went out by another door. He did not know if there was another door or not; but it would be easy enough to see the tall slenderness of mother and child half the shop's length away.

He had several commissions to execute for the ladies at the shop. There were patterns to be matched, all sorts of infinitesimal as well as big things to be purchased. He put himself into the hands of a shopwalker who entrusted him to some one else. The girls behind the counter giggled a little behind the curtains of their hanging wares. He was so painstakingly conscientious. He would match a scrap of wool, a reel of silk exactly. Spare, elegant, upright, he looked what he was, a man of a strenuous character and active life. The incongruity tickled the damsels.

While he stood waiting with grave politeness for them to bring the things he wanted—hardly able to restrain himself when a narrow-chested girl struggled under the weights of heavy boxes—his clear, long-sighted eyes roved hither and thither in search of Ciss and Cecilia.

He was rewarded at last by a glimpse of

them. So they had not left the shop by the other door, the existence of which he had discovered. They were going upstairs. He determined to stay where he was till he saw them come down. The list of his commissions was nearly full.

There was a scrap of velvet to be matched. The narrow-chested girl brought several boxes without result, while he waited with grave patience, disdaining to take a chair, and the stream of shopping women passed up and down by him, hardly one failing to look at him a second time.

“It might be upstairs,” the girl said at last, having failed to match the patterns. “Would you come this way, please, sir?”

He followed her up the stairs, looking over her head for Ciss and Cecilia. They were not to be seen anywhere. This part of the shop was very quiet. There were ladies apparently waiting for something, sitting about on velvet couches, turning over with languid interest the pages of the fashion-papers. Round about him were many little doors, the purpose of which he did not think to conjecture, half-glass doors that led into little square boxes of rooms.

He stood looking about him while the assistant went in search of the velvet. Where on earth had Ciss and Cecilia gone to? Had the earth opened and swallowed them? While he

stared about him a girl with a skirt over her arm came through one of the little doors. Ah, of course, they must be fitting-rooms. He could see over the whole range of the upper shop. Into one of the fitting-rooms the objects of his search must have vanished.

“Please come this way,” his special assistant said at his side. She was carrying a heavy box in her arms. To the amazement of the waiting ladies, and apparently to the girl’s own embarrassment, for she blushed shyly, he took the box from her and carried it to the place she indicated.

They were in an enclosure formed of velvet seats on two sides with the fitting-rooms at one end. The assistant lifted the lid off the box of velvet and compared the pattern. Yes, that was it. She thought they had it in stock.

Sir Paul would have abhorred the idea of peeping deliberately, but he could not help glancing up at the sound of an opening door towards the fitting-room nearest to him. As the dressmaker, coming through, held the door ajar for an instant, he caught sight of some one standing in a long trailing garment of white satin. He could not see the wearer of the garment; there was a round white arm, that was all that was to be seen, warm against the dead-white satin. Then the door closed.

“We are very busy with a wedding order,”

the dressmaker said, stopping on her way to speak to one of the waiting ladies; "so I fear I shall have to ask you to wait a while, madam."

She had the bodice of white satin trimmed with delicate lace over one arm. The lady she addressed was immediately interested.

"Oh, is that the wedding-dress?" she asked.

Two or three other ladies came up, as though the thing of white satin and lace were a magnet. They hung over it, admiring it, with little gasps of delight, till the dressmaker went on her way.

Sir Paul Chadwick was conscious of a sudden annoyance and uneasiness. Yes, he supposed the velvet was all right, if she thought it matched, he said to the assistant. He was tired of his morning's shopping, and he glanced with uneasy surmise at the door of the room behind which the bride was being fitted with her wedding-gown.

He walked to the end of the shop to wait for his bill. While he stood by the cashier's desk he watched the door of the fitting-room. He wanted to be sure who it was that was being fitted. He filled the cheque, gave the address to which the goods were to be sent, and still the door had not opened. He had no excuse for waiting, but he waited, the obliging cashier helping him by a running dissertation on the things of the hour, to which he answered somewhat at random.

Ah—at last! Just as he had felt that he *must* go, he saw the door of the fitting-room open. The cashier, who was a cheerful gossip and led a dreary life in this upper wilderness of fitting-rooms, broached a new subject. The door of the fitting-room opened, and there came out, as he had known there would, the two he had been waiting for. There was a little third person with them, a head lower than they. He did not notice the insignificant presence.

He held back while they went down the stairs. He followed them to the lower shop, amid the throng of pushing and striving women. He heard a comment here and there on their height and beauty. When he reached the door they were almost immediately in front of him. He waited, inspecting with apparent interest a row of tortoise-shell combs.

Some one joined them—the bounder! The bounder in radiant humor. His coarse, cheerful voice came to Sir Paul's ears.

“We shall lunch at the *Dolphin*,” he said; “unless you prefer somewhere else.”

Sir Paul had intended to lunch at the *Shelbourne* if Ciss and Cecilia had honored him with their company. He was old-fashioned. In his day ladies had not dined in public restaurants, cheek by jowl with any fellow who cared to pay for the privilege.

He saw them move down the street as he left

the doorway, and he turned the other way in a sudden fury. If Cecilia had only chosen a gentleman! His indignation involved Ciss as well as Maurice Grace. Good heavens, what a husband for an exquisite creature like Cecilia!

He moved along the crowded pavement seeing nothing, nobody, he passed. He was a country member of the Kildare Street Club, but he didn't feel like talking to his friends and acquaintances at the moment. Stephen's Green presented itself to him as a harbor of refuge. He crossed over and found a seat under a golden tree which he had to himself. The place was less crowded than it would have been in the summer.

He gazed moodily before him, at the stretch of ornamental water, the greedy ducks gobbling the bread which some children were throwing to them, at the children themselves, without seeing them. He was intensely annoyed and irritated. He ought to have let the past be. To find Ciss and Cecilia in such a *milieu* was intolerable.

Beyond the railings of the green a barrel-organ struck up its hard, mechanical tune that silenced the late songs of the birds.

One of the little girls who had given her last crumb to an insatiable drake caught her little skirt between her hands. She had golden-brown eyes and golden-brown hair, fair warm

skin, with a thought of brown in it; the coloring was like Betty's. Lifting her little feet prettily, she began to dance to the organ. It was Betty to the life. So had Betty danced through her childhood. Why, even now she walked as though her little feet longed to dance. As he watched the child he smiled, because he thought of Betty. He had always brought Betty a fairing when he paid his infrequent visits to town. Pretty Betty should have her fairing. He had all but forgotten it for thinking of Cecilia. Were they all to forget Betty for thinking of Cecilia?

He glanced at his watch. Lunch-time, and he was aware that he was hungry. He would surprise McClellan. Afterwards he would spend an hour hunting the curio-shops on the quays for a fairing for Betty. And he would go home to-night. There would be plenty of time to do everything and catch the night-mail. Dublin was a wilderness to him; he had been so long out of it. He was sick of it; it would be good to get home.

He went off with quite a brisk step to his friend's house. It was astonishing how that thought of finding Betty a fairing had cheered him up. He imagined the pleasure in Betty's brown eyes, that had been sad of late. Confound Kilrush! How dared he make Betty sad!

He was lucky in finding just the fairing that Betty would like—an old brooch of a single amethyst, surrounded by seed pearls. When he had put it in his breast-pocket he seemed to find it quite warm there. A memory occurred to him of a certain outdoor expedition of long ago, at which Betty, then a young lady of six summers, had fallen asleep after much gaiety and had been carried home in his arms. He remembered quite well how warmly the little gold-brown head had rested upon his shoulder.

## CHAPTER XXI

### FELLOW-TRAVELERS

RATHER to his disgust Sir Paul was not destined to have a solitary journey. Just at the last—while he waited for the whistle to sound, when he had settled himself comfortably in his corner of the railway-carriage with the intention of sleeping away the hours of the journey, the carriage door was opened: a porter pushed in a gun-case, a bundle of rugs and golf-sticks, and another passenger jumped in.

“Hullo! You back, Kilrush?”

“Yes, the sport was unsatisfactory, and I didn’t care to give England any more of my holiday. How lucky that we should be fellow-travelers.”

Sir Paul relaxed to Kilrush’s charming smile.

“Yes, I suppose it is lucky,” he said. “I had rather looked forward to a quiet night. But you are a better companion than most.”

“And I will let you sleep when you will. It’s too early to sleep yet. Have a cigar?”

After all, Kilrush was a pleasant companion. They fell into easy talk over their cigars, while

the train screamed and tore away through the moonlit country, past towns and villages and quiet fields, past bogs that reflected the moon's face in a thousand mirrors, by many a little coppice and lit homestead.

"You are going home? To Kilrush Manor?"

"For a day or two. I have business. Her incessantly active ladyship will need my attendance next week. I shall probably look in at the House of Dromore on my way up to Dublin."

"I saw them all a few days ago—all except Betty. Betty is at Kilkee."

"I know. I am glad she is there. She was looking a bit off-color—didn't you think?"

Confound the fellow! Was he such a fool as not to know that Betty's being off-color had coincided with his own very marked attentions to Betty's cousin? He wasn't worth Betty's being off-color for. No one would be worth it. Confound youth and its egoism! Sir Paul was all in a pother because of Kilrush's speech about Betty. His nearly fifty years of life had not curbed his impulsiveness. He had a sudden desire now to punish Kilrush as he himself had been punished.

"By the way, I have seen Miss Grace while I have been staying up in town," he said.

Kilrush looked up at him with an air

of bright interest and his color changed slightly.

"Ah, you saw her?" he said.

"Yes; I saw her and her beautiful mother. Her father, too. He is an interesting fellow."

"I shall see her, I hope, next week," Kilrush said; and there was a sudden lift in his voice as though at the thought he had grown light-hearted.

He smiled down at the cigar he was holding between his fingers; and Sir Paul had a revelation. Kilrush was not vacillating between Betty and Cecilia then, as he had thought with sharp indignation. Confound the fellow! how far had he gone with Betty? Was he going to break Betty's little heart? The thought made him restless. After all it had grown to be the habit of years with him to consider Betty first.

"Next week," he said. "Why, she may be a bride next week. Her wedding-dress is in the making."

"What!" Kilrush turned darkly red and then unusually pale for him. His eyes blazed.

"You were saying," he said in a thick voice, "that Cecilia, that Miss Grace. . . . You are surely mistaken."

Sir Paul's anger melted to compassion.

For the moment Betty was out of his mind. The evident fear and suffering in Kilrush's face touched him. He had always liked the lad and thought well of him.

"My poor boy!" he said, and he put a fatherly hand on Kilrush's shoulder: "I'm afraid there is no mistake. Put her out of your head. She is going to be married to her cousin. I confess it seems a shameful sacrifice. He is not a gentleman; quite otherwise. I don't know what her parents are thinking about. I fear it is too late, or I might ask Lady Dromore to exert her influence. It is a deplorable thing."

Kilrush lifted his eyes and looked at Sir Paul: they were bloodshot. A wave of suffering seemed to have passed over his face, disturbing and marring its debonair beauty.

"Do you mean an impossible bounder who is called Bernard Grace? I had to protect Miss Grace from his insolence the day we travelled down together. Not that fellow?"

"That is the man."

"I won't believe it—unless she tells me."

He stood up and walked to the other end of the carriage as though he would hide his face. For a few seconds he stood there, staring out apparently at the moonlit landscape, while his fellow-traveler gazed in his direction with an air of grave compassion and a growing con-

cern. The thought of Betty, never long absent, returned to his mind. So Betty was out of it; perhaps, indeed, never had been in it. Kilrush had come and gone as freely as himself at the House of Dromore. He and Betty had danced together, played tennis together, ridden together, fished together, hunted together. They had many tastes and pursuits in common; yet, might it not be that Kilrush had not really singled out Betty from her sisters? The others were preoccupied, the one with her lover, the other with her father and with her serious purpose in life. Was it not natural that Betty and Kilrush should have fallen into the relationship of comrades? And was it therefore inevitable that they should become lovers?

Setting his mind to look back, Sir Paul realized that he had never seen word or look that would prove Kilrush to be Betty's lover. Perhaps he had been deceived, perhaps Betty's mother had been deceived, into taking comradeship for love, since they both held Betty to be so sweet a thing that they could not but believe any man much in her society to be in love with her.

And poor Betty—Betty's altered looks this summer had made it plain to them that Betty had given her heart to one who seemed to hold it lightly. They had never spoken about it,

Betty's mother and Betty's loyal friend, but each had felt that the other understood and was in trouble for Betty.

To be sure Kilrush must have loved Betty if Cecilia had not come. And now that he must give up thinking of Cecilia, would not his heart in the rebound turn naturally to Betty? Perhaps things would all come right in the end for Betty and everybody. As for himself, he would harbor no more matrimonial ideas. What an old fool he had been to think that at his age a girl like Cecilia would look at him! And yet he would have been better than her choice. He dragged his mind abruptly from thinking on Cecilia's choice. That made unpleasant thinking.

Kilrush turned about from his inspection of the landscape and sat down again in his seat opposite Sir Paul.

"Do you know what I am going to do?" he said. "I am going to take the next train back to Dublin to see for myself. If it is true, what you tell me, she ought to be saved from herself. It is too awful! I don't know how I am going to do it, but I am going to try."

In the dim light of the carriage his face showed convulsed.

"My poor lad, what can you do?" Sir Paul answered him. Then he spoke on impulse. "Don't go. Go to Betty, to Kilkee. She will

comfort you. Why need any one to whom Betty is kind break his heart for Cecilia?"

Kilrush stared at him, and broke into an unhappy laugh.

"Why should I go to Betty?" he asked. "To be sure she is a good little comrade, and would be sorry for me. But how should she make me forget Cecilia?"

Sir Paul looked away from him.

"That is for you to say, Kilrush," he answered, stirring uneasily because Betty's secret was under discussion. What would Betty say if she knew? She would probably never forgive him.

Again Kilrush laughed, and there was something of sad amusement in the sound.

"Do you go and tell her about it, Sir Paul," he said. "I daresay Betty is rather lonely by this time, and would be glad to see a friend's face. It must be getting late for the sad sea waves."

The speech stirred a certain joyful excitement into life in the elder man's heart. He had not thought of carrying his fairing to Betty at Kilkee. But after all why should he not? Betty would be very glad to see him. And he could satisfy himself as to how Betty was looking. It was impossible for a girl of Betty's spirit, he hoped, to go on grieving for a man who was madly in love with another girl.

"She may have returned home," he said sedately.

"She is there for another fortnight," Kilrush replied. "I heard from my aunt the other day. Even the House of Dromore will be very lonely without Betty. On the whole, I am rather glad that I am not going to be there."

After a time they relapsed into silence. As the night went on, Sir Paul dozed fitfully. Every time he awoke he saw Kilrush sitting bolt upright staring straight before him.

Some time in the chilliest hour of the early morning the train ran into their station. The two men got out and a sleepy porter came to take their luggage. It was a most uncomfortable hour at which to arrive, while yet all the world was asleep. The oil-lamps of the station flickered and flared in the high wind. It would not be daylight yet for some hours. They were the only passengers to alight; and as they stood on the platform, their hands deep in their overcoat pockets, both men were sensible of the raw atmosphere and the discouraging chill of the early morning.

"Don't go home, Kilrush," Sir Paul said. "Come with me to Arlo. I shall be glad of your society, and you can start as early from Arlo as from your own house."

Kilrush consented, the more readily because his own carriage had not arrived. Besides, he

wanted to hear more from Sir Paul of his meeting with Cecilia and the things that had happened. He would return to Dublin by the midday train, getting in some time in the afternoon.

The morning post brought a letter for Sir Paul from Lady Dromore. There was an enclosure which he read with knitted brows. They were alone in the breakfast-room, except for a rabble of dogs on the hearthrug.

**“MY DEAR PAUL:**

“What is the meaning of the enclosed from Cecilia? I cannot make it out. Will you come to me, if you have returned, and tell me about Ciss and Cecilia? I am impatient to know all that has happened. Perhaps you can put a happier complexion on the letter than it presents at this moment. Is it possible the poor child has some undesirable entanglement with some one quite unfitted for her? I pray not. But you will tell me everything.

“Always your friend.

“EDITH DROMORE.”

Sir Paul read aloud Lady Dromore's letter, and a portion of the letter she enclosed from Cecilia: not all. He had a shyness about letting Kilrush know that, at his age, he had hoped to win Cecilia.

"I'm afraid it is strong corroboration," said Kilrush, listening quietly: "perhaps I might just as well do my business here and go back to Sussex. I more than half promised them to return."

He smiled, but he was very pale, and the elder man looked at him with sympathy.

"You accept her own letter?"

"I fear I must, taken in conjunction with other things. What you told me was possibly capable of another explanation. Then—she would not listen to me when I saw her some weeks ago. It never occurred to me that there was any one else. I thought only that she was not ready. She is such a nun-like creature."

He groaned as he said it, with the thought of Cecilia married to Bernard Grace. Once again he could not face another man's eyes, but got up from the table and went and stood by the window. Coming back again after a few minutes of silence his forehead was damp as though he had been through acute physical suffering.

"She told me I was not to come back," he said.

"Ah, I did not know she had refused you. That would have been conclusive evidence in itself."

"I don't know even now that I ought not to go and make one more struggle for her," Kil-

rush said. "If I do not, perhaps afterwards I shall feel like the fellow in the poem.

"Why, better even have burst like a thief  
And borne you away to a rock for us two  
In a moment's horror, bright, bloody, and brief,  
Then changed to myself again; I slew  
Myself in that moment: a ruffian lies  
Somewhere: your slave, see, born in his place.'

There's a deal of the natural man in the most civilized of us, Chadwick, when it comes to another man taking the woman we love."

"Yes, I know," Sir Paul said, glancing at the eyes, bright with pain, in the wrung and tortured face—"I've lived through it."

For a few seconds there was silence in the room, broken only by the sound of Kilrush's fingers as they beat a tattoo restlessly on the table-cloth.

"How did the father strike you, Chadwick?" he asked suddenly. "Not a man to make an iron bargain for his only child, and stick to it, eh?"

"Not at all. He has made his wife happy. He seemed devoted to his wife and daughter."

"I might see him. No use troubling her, when she has already given me her answer."

"Yes, you might see him. If you knew you had done all possible. . . ."

"It might help me to face the thing. I was

never one for sitting down inactive where there was anything to be done."

"It is worst of all when there is nothing to be done," Sir Paul said, and his eyes seemed as though they remembered old sorrows.

"But afterwards, Kilrush," he said, "afterwards, when there is nothing more to be done, you will take it like a man, my lad?"

"I sha'n't get drunk or go to the devil, even temporarily, if that is what you mean, though I can understand the temptation such things present to the rejected lover."

Kilrush was to drive to Killarney, where he should catch the midday express to Dublin, so saving a slow branch-line connection. On the way he made a détour to drop Sir Paul Chadwick at the gates of the House of Dromore.

"Give my love to them all," he said. "I shall have to come back in a day or two to attend to business, and I shall see them. I shall let you know how things go with me."

What Lord Kilrush had not reckoned with was that as he drove at top speed along a road with deep ditches to either side of it, they should encounter a motor-car in which a neighboring landowner's chauffeur was taking a couple of his friends for a spin, and going faster than he would have dared to do on roads where he might have met a policeman. Kilrush's driver swerved sharply to one side to

avert a collision. The horse just cleared the motor, but the car was overturned and the occupants tumbled into the left-hand ditch, the horse and car a-top of them. Kilrush fell not altogether clear of the horse's hoofs, one of which kicked him in the head—a most unchancy thing, according to the driver, who had seen many such spills on the same road without any untoward consequences.

“The last one,” he remarked, “that I seen spilt was an American admiral, that was after being terrible say-sick, the poor man, on the Lakes o’ Killarney. He fell so soft he thought he was in his bunk, and began singin’ ‘Rock me to sleep, mother.’”

For several days after that Kilrush was quite indifferent to the world at large, quite oblivious of what things might be happening in Dublin or elsewhere.



## CHAPTER XXII

### ON THE CLIFFS

SIR PAUL CHADWICK, meanwhile, had lunched at the House of Dromore and had had a talk with Lady Dromore. For once in his life—he hardly knew why—he was inclined to be impatient of Lady Dromore's gentle sympathy, expressed though it was by looks rather than by words. Lady Dromore was shocked at what he had to tell her about Cecilia's coming marriage.

"I'm afraid the poor child must have had this dreadful entanglement before she came to us," she said, "and I blame myself for it. I ought not to have been put off years ago when I listened to poor Ciss's mother-in-law. Yet what she said seemed reasonable, or I should not have listened to it. I never was fonder of Ciss than when I gave her up."

"Ah, what was that? You have not told me."

"Old Mrs. Grace—she struck me as being very shrewd, and she was certainly devoted to Ciss—she said to me one day that my coming

and going affected poor Ciss badly; that she was restless for a long time afterwards; that she had only begun to be happy when I came again. ‘Let her be,’ she said, ‘she can’t belong to two worlds. Let her belong to her husband’s.’ It was quite true, and most unwillingly I went no more to see poor Ciss. I have never heard that she missed me. It has been all so difficult. We could not ask Ciss here because . . .”

“Because she belonged to her husband’s world and because he would have made an odd figure in yours?”

“Not that,” Lady Dromore said, almost with indignation. “There may have been a time when I thought that. But not after I came to know Dr. Grace. Any woman must have been moved by a man who loved so well as he did—any woman worth considering. Tell me—you saw him: what have the years made of him? He had possibilities. The last time I saw him he seemed to be on the way to overtake them.”

“He has overtaken them. He has a good face, a good, anxious, kind, trustworthy face. His wife sees nothing amiss with him.”

“And you really think that Ciss is happy?”

“She is quite happy. I will tell you what you want to know and are shy about asking me. My memory is quite blotted out of Mrs.

Grace's heart. She has eyes only for her husband. But she has not forgotten you. She asked eagerly for all I could tell her about you and yours."

"My poor Ciss! I must see her. And they must come to us here. The gulf between us has lasted too long."

Sir Paul shook his head.

"I would let it be. You may be quite willing to receive Ciss's husband. You will hardly be willing to receive Cecilia's."

"Oh, that horror! I can hardly believe it. What will Betty think? She is so fond of her cousin: it will be a terrible shock to her. By the way, Kilrush knew she was still at Kilkee? How odd that he should have flown back like that! Who would be a vice-regal aid-de-camp, with the present energetic administration at Court?"

Sir Paul noticed the connection in Lady Dromore's mind between Betty and Kilrush. Knowing what he knew, it was perhaps quite natural that he should feel nettled. He said to himself that it was unlike Edith Dromore's delicacy and distinction of mind to be ready to give such a daughter as Betty to a man who had not asked for her. Why would the minds of women hurry on to anticipate things which were never to have an existence?

"I was thinking of running down to see

Betty," he said. "I will tell her about Cecilia."

It was the most natural thing in the world that Sir Paul should run down to see Betty. They had been close friends and intimates since Betty's charming childhood, when she had danced her way into Sir Paul's sore heart. The milestones in Betty's life were marked by Sir Paul's gifts and graces to Betty. Her first pony, her first watch, the first puppy to belong absolutely to her, had been Sir Paul's gifts; he had kept her innocent book-shelves stocked; he had supplied her with sweets; he had discovered new and delightful flowers for her garden. He had always been Betty's friend.

"Persuade them to come back," Lady Dromore said. "The fine weather has broken up early. It is time for their own firesides. Perhaps you will give them an escort?"

"I shall be delighted to look after them."

Sir Paul had said nothing about Kilrush and Cecilia. That was Kilrush's secret, which only he himself was at liberty to tell. But now Lady Dromore touched upon it.

"Kilrush seemed to like Cecilia very much," she said, with a little blush. "I know Betty thought that he was in love with Cecilia. He will be very much shocked and disgusted at her marriage."

“There will be many ready to console Kilrush,” Sir Paul said, with a little bitterness. He was not one to be jealous of the gifts of other men, but it was a moment in which he felt jarred, he hardly knew why, a moment in which another man’s youth seemed to him an enviable possession.

Kilrush’s accident had occurred some two or three miles from the House of Dromore, which was the nearest house of any importance, and two miles nearer than Kilrush’s own house.

It happened that Dr. Brady, driving on his outside car to a bad case in the mountains, came upon the scene of the accident almost immediately after it had occurred. He caught the chauffeur of the motor-car just starting his engines.

“You will take this gentleman who has been hurt to the House of Dromore,” he said, “and myself along with him. The horse and car can follow at its own pace.”

The chauffeur demurred. He explained in voluble French that he had to meet his master at an afternoon train.

“You’ll never meet him,” said Dr. Brady with startling ferocity, “if you don’t do exactly as I tell you. Here, give me those cushions.”

He spoke in an argot which he had learned when he walked a Paris hospital in the old

great days, when he looked to be a specialist in nervous diseases and a girl at home believed in him.

The chauffeur, alarmed, did as he was bidden, and the injured man was conveyed as gently as might be to the House of Dromore. The doctor got him to bed, made a hurried examination, then turned to Lady Dromore who was standing by, anxiously.

“He’ll take no harm now for a few hours,” he said, “and they’ve scouts out looking for me above on the hill. I’ve got to see a poor woman through her trouble. As soon as I can I’ll come back. I don’t think, your ladyship, that we need be ordering his funeral yet.”

He gave a few simple directions about his patient and drove away as fast as his little mare could carry him, his too-florid face anxious and troubled, for all his cheerful words.

Somewhere about lunch-time next day Sir Paul Chadwick got to Kilkee. As he walked along the sands to the hotel he met Mrs. Chapman, to whom he had to tell of the accident to Kilrush. It was a mild, bright autumn morning, and the lady had been spending the morning on the sands reading a novel.

“And you tell me there’s nothing very bad?” she said.

“The doctor says that he will be himself in a few weeks’ time.”

“I’m going straight back to the House of Dromore to see him myself.”

“And I’m going to be your escort. Where is Betty?”

Mrs. Chapman turned and looked anxiously in the direction of the cliffs.

“She’s gone off for a walk along the sands. Do you see any sign of her?” she asked.

“None: I shall go to meet her.”

“The tide is running in fast.”

“I shall meet her and bring her back long before the tide gets in.”

He set out walking rapidly towards the cliffs. The season was over and the place looked strangely deserted. After he had passed the houses the sands were empty, save for the flashing sea-gulls turning in the wind against the face of the gray cliffs.

He looked out eagerly for Betty as he went on. He expected to see her behind every jutting cliff that intercepted his view, but he rounded one after the other and there was no sign of her. Like all such places, the distances were very deceptive. He seemed to make but slow progress along the sands.

Looking back, the white houses of the town still seemed but a little way behind. Looking ahead, he saw nothing but cliffs—cliffs and the gulls and the sea.

The tide was running in fast. There was

a silver tongue high up on the sands in front of him. Looking back he saw pools filling up where he had just walked on dry sand.

He began to grow anxious about the tide. The sea was rough after the high wind of yesterday. There was not so much as a fishing-boat in sight. At high tide the sea, he knew, leaped against the cliff-wall and filled all the caverns.

He was obliged to move higher, out of the way of a wave that ran foaming up to his feet. Things were beginning to look serious. There were, he knew, here and there, steps cut in the face of the cliff, natural stairs by which one might ascend. Some of them ended in narrow paths over the cliff, but gave such slender foot-hold and handhold that a wave leaping higher than its fellows, a blast of wind, a momentary giddiness, might easily dislodge one.

He paused for a second or two. Perhaps, after all, Betty had been wise and had returned by the cliffs and not by the sands. It would be a pity if he should get drowned for nothing. He had been in tight places before, tighter than this, and he was not afraid. Only he said to himself that it would be a sad blunder if he should be drowned and die out of a world in which Betty still lived.

Mechanically he put his hand to his breast-pocket and felt the morocco case of Betty's

fairing. His grasp closed over it. He had a vision of Betty's ready blush and her delighted smile. It would be a pity if Betty were now safe and sound back at the hotel and that she was not to receive her fairing after all.

He turned about and glanced back towards the town, which was hidden now behind the projecting cliffs. Then he smiled to himself grimly: there was no question of prudence. He was in for it now. The water had reached the base of the last bastion round which he had come. It was flinging itself high against it. As he looked back he saw the smoke of spray flung high in the air.

He looked towards the face of the cliff. The sea was swirling now about his feet. He had to run from a wave that caught him as he ran. Coming again, it spread more widely. As it advanced it flung itself higher and higher; as it receded it tore down stones and pebbles with a great noise of sucking and churning.

Setting his face resolutely, he saw ahead of him—Betty. She looked just a little speck of red when he saw her first. He shouted to encourage her and climbing higher out of the reach of the waves he ran as fast as he could towards her, over the sand which was still smooth and hard enough at the foot of the cliffs.

As he ran he noted mechanically the for-

mation of the cliff. There was nothing that did not end in a smooth cliff face, but at one point the waves had eaten away the solid wall into a succession of narrow terraces rising one above the other, on which it might be possible to find a refuge from the wind and the waves. He noticed the gulls flying about the face of the cliffs. It was possible there might be some cavern, some fissure up there into which they might creep till help reached them.

Now he and Betty were close. She was very pale and her breath came sobbingly. He could hear it above the noise of the sea and the crying of the gulls. Her hair had got loose under her flat cap and was lying in bronze masses on her shoulders. Reaching to him she clung to him, sobbing in his arms.

“Oh! oh!” she sobbed. “I thought I was going to drown alone, not a soul near me. Oh, wasn’t God good to send you? How shall we ever escape?”

“Don’t be frightened,” he said. “I am here to take care of you. They will send help. Mrs. Chapman knows the way we have gone. We can wait for it, or till the tide turns, up there. You will be quite safe with me.”

The blood came back to her cheek.

“I am not at all afraid—with you,” she said.

He thanked Heaven he was still spare and active—that every muscle was as tense as a

young athlete's. He had kept himself in good physical training, although he had led a stay-at-home life.

It was not so easy as it had looked to climb those shelves. There was nothing but sharp spines of rock to hold on by. They wounded and slipped through the fingers. Where one shelf overhung the other it was an immense physical effort to drag himself up: then to lie face downward and help Betty to follow him. By the time they stood on the third shelf his hands were torn and bleeding. Betty had a gash down one cheek. They were both drenched with the sea which was leaping at them with ever-increasing violence. They were blinded and stunned with the shock and reverberation of the waves, and were glad to stand awhile with their faces towards the rock, gripping what they could to steady them as the wave retreated, threatening each time to drag them with it.

"We cannot stand this for long," Sir Paul said, with the sea in his eyes and throat. "We must work along this ledge. There is no climbing higher at this point. Oh, look out!"

A bigger wave than had yet come drenched them. He had flung his arm round Betty as it came, steadyng himself with the other hand grasping a spur of the rock.

"Better let me go," she sobbed. "I can't

stand much more, and you will be drowned too."

After the big wave there came a little lull, when the waves only broke in spray about their feet. While the respite lasted they crept along the ledge side by side, their faces to the cliff-wall. The ledge widened now, and as the next great wave broke they had more foothold to withstand it.

In front of them was a spot where the gulls were disappearing and reappearing, sailing in and out, their wide wings shining through the spray, screaming angrily as they saw the human intruders, and making as though they would beat them off with their wings.

Sir Paul uttered in his throat a sound which was a cry of extreme thankfulness. A step or two and there was a fissure in the cliff full of the nests of the gulls, large enough to receive them both standing.

"Thank God, we are safe," he said, turning about and taking Betty into his arms. She put her arms about his neck and lay on his breast with her eyes shut. The gulls were still screaming and darting about them, and now and again they were drenched with spray, but the waves could not dislodge them. They were quite safe to wait there till the tide should turn and set them free.

Sir Paul stood stroking the drenched head

against his breast. His little Betty! Why, how foolish he had been to be dazzled by Cecilia's young beauty! He had loved Betty all the time. But she—what would she say to-morrow when they were back in safety? Now she was exhausted, overcome, very glad to turn to him for comfort and reassurance. But to-morrow?

"In a few hours' time the tide will have gone down sufficiently to allow us to escape," he said. "My dear, you are drenched. I hope you will not take a chill."

Her eyes opened and looked at him, then closed again: with a little air of delicious weariness she settled herself closer into his arms.

"Only for you," she said, "the waves would have been battering me against the rocks by this time. How glad I was to see you! When I saw you I knew I was saved. It seemed so terribly lonely to drown like that, and I so young, and never having tasted real happiness."

"Betty," he asked in a whisper, "who is it that could give you real happiness? I have sometimes thought it was—Kilrush?"

She leaned her head back on his shoulder and her wet hair was drawn across his lips.

"Kilrush!" she repeated. "Oh, what folly! Why Kilrush was in love with Cecilia. I have never thought of Kilrush."

"But you were unhappy, Betty, when you thought Kilrush cared for Cecilia. Your unhappiness was plain for us all to see."

"Not for Kilrush," she said, with the sweetness of her lips close to his.

"Then for whom, Betty? Don't say it was for me—a man old enough to be your father. Betty, Betty, do you know what you are saying, what you are doing? It cannot be that you care for me?"

"You are quite sure it is not Cecilia," she said, lifting her lips to his. "I have been so unhappy because I thought you cared for Cecilia."

Their lips met. There did not seem any necessity to say more.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### THE PILGRIM OF LOVE

So all need for Sir Paul's errand to Betty was over. He had no longer to face the task of detaching her heart from Kilrush, since the heart had always been his own. Betty wearing her fairing, and an old ring of rose diamonds and pearls, trod the earth like a happy young goddess. Every one was delighted. The only cloud on any one's joy was Cecilia.

No word had come from Ciss or Cecilia. At another time Lady Dromore might have thought it her duty to write, but now what with Kilrush lying with his head in bandages, and the joyful news about Betty, and the preparations for Sheila's wedding, and the coming home of Brian from the China station, she had little time to think. Besides, what good was it for her to write? Nothing could now undo Cecilia's choice. Perhaps she was already married. When Betty begged hard to be allowed to go to Cecilia, Sir Paul and her mother were on the side of prudence.

"You will only make her unhappy," Sir Paul said. "Better let her be. You would in

all probability not find her; and if you did, it would be too late to interfere."

No one seemed to think there could be any doubt in the matter. If anybody had doubted, Cecilia's own letter to Lady Dromore seemed to put it beyond the possibility of doubt. Only Kilrush, as his wounds healed and his brain became clear, fretted and fretted because of his powerlessness.

They were all very good to Kilrush. Somehow the Dromores, as well as Betty and Sir Paul Chadwick, seemed to know at last that Kilrush had been in love with Cecilia.

He chafed and fretted over the things he had not done.

"I ought not to have taken her dismissal," he said gloomily to Sir Paul Chadwick. "I should not have left her to herself. I ought to have come back again and again and have got at the heart of her mystery. Her mother would have been on my side. I ought to have gone to the mother and father. After all, I had more to offer than—he. And still I cannot believe her married, for I think I should know. I am sure I should know, as I should know if she were dead. I had rather she were dead."

At last the bandages were off, and Dr. Brady, who had treated his patient with great

skill as well as great devotion, gave him leave to make the journey to Dublin.

"I'm not saying I'd give you leave if you were a reasonable man," he said; "but as you're not reasonable it does you more harm to keep you lying here than to let you go."

The doctor too seemed to know what was the matter with Kilrush.

"If you see Maurice Grace in Dublin, my lord," he said, "tell him I'm proud to hear of his progress. Maybe he'd look after you. You're a discreditable sort of patient for me to put out of my hands. You'll take care of yourself and not pick up a chill, for you're not yet the man you were. And rest as much as you can; and don't fret."

Kilrush made a wry face.

"It's as much as telling you to be happy," Dr. Brady said, looking at him with a dry kindness. "If we could only prescribe happiness now, our fortunes would be made. Or marred perhaps. We wouldn't have many patients if people were only happy."

"I think I'll take a sea voyage presently to pick me up," Kilrush said, not meeting the doctor's eye. "Will you come along with me and look after me? Afterwards, quit that hole you're in and come and settle down near me. We want a doctor in these parts. There's a

nice little house inside my park-gates, and there's a good little woman—the widowed daughter of the housekeeper at Kilrush Manor—who'd look after you. Think it over."

Dr. Brady went all manner of colors.

"I'll think it over, thank you," he said. "But—I'm afraid it's too late. I'm too old a man to save, Lord Kilrush. I confess I should be glad to leave Drumree behind and to see the last of Mary Anne Slattery. She's ruined me with her dirt and bad cooking. Sure, there ought to be a mission in this country to convert the women to housekeepers. They kill the soul through the body; that's what they do: they kill the soul through the body. Many a poor fellow would never take to the bottle if it wasn't that he was living like a pig."

He went off, shaking his head mournfully; and a few hours later Lord Kilrush started for Dublin. His aunt had been very anxious to travel with him, but he would not hear of it. He preferred to go alone. After all it was not a very exhausting journey, and he could not come to much harm.

It was too late to go to Merrion Square that evening, so he dined and went to bed early. Short as the journey was it had tired him, since he had not recovered his strength. But tired as he was he slept badly. The hours were

tedious that kept him from the knowledge of how things were with Cecilia.

He could not wait next morning for decorous afternoon visiting. He must know the truth. It could not have been more than eleven when he walked up the steps of Dr. Grace's house. The doctor's brougham was going up and down in front of the house. Before Kilrush could knock, the door was opened and Maurice Grace himself came out.

He looked at Kilrush interrogatively. It was their first meeting, and he saw that the young man looked ill.

"If you wish to see me professionally," he said, "I can give you a little time. But it is my hour for visiting my patients. I am at home from three to six."

He turned as though to go back.

"I do not wish to consult you professionally," Kilrush said. "I am just out of a doctor's hands, and not very fit, I confess. But I have a question to ask you. You are Dr. Grace —are you not? Allow me to introduce myself —I am Lord Kilrush."

"Ah! I am happy to meet you, Lord Kilrush. I have heard of you, of course. Is there any reason why you shouldn't ask your question as we drive? I am going out to Dunderum to see a patient."

"None whatever."

Kilrush felt greatly attracted by Maurice Grace. He looked so kind and simple and sympathetic. What did it matter that his figure was clumsy and his features heavy, that he had the stubby fingers of a man of the people, as Kilrush noticed when they sat opposite each other in the carriage? Maurice Grace had insisted on taking the front seat and leaving the back one to his guest.

“Well?” the doctor asked, with a smile which all of a sudden lit up his plain face, redeeming its plainness.

“I have a most extraordinary question to ask you, Dr. Grace,” Kilrush said, turning very red.

“Ask it.”

“Is it true that your daughter is married?”

Maurice Grace stared his bewilderment.

“God bless my soul, no!” he said emphatically. “What on earth put such an idea into your head?”

Such a look came over Kilrush’s face that the father had no need of being told that here was a young man in love with Cecilia. It was as though he were relieved of a sentence of death. The haggard care and anxiety swept away from his face as a cloud is swept from a landscape, leaving him thin indeed from his recent illness but young and joyful as of old.

“What on earth put such an idea into your

head? There is no thought of Cecilia's marrying."

As he said it a light cloud settled down on his face. He glanced at Kilrush, with a pitying expression.

"I have just come from Lady Dromore. *They* believe it. It must be a misunderstanding. Sir Paul Chadwick, who was here some weeks ago, gathered that Miss Grace was about to marry her cousin. A letter of hers to Lady Dromore seemed a confirmation of what he had gathered."

"Confound him!" said Maurice Grace, with startling force and suddenness. "Confound him! what business had he to gather such things? Her cousin! It is not possible that he thought my daughter was about to marry Bernard Grace?"

"I'm afraid he did think it. He saw things that made him believe it."

Maurice Grace smiled grimly.

"As a matter of fact Bernard Grace is married. He was married a couple of weeks ago to a Miss Tollemache. His mother did not approve of the engagement, and they were married from my house. I remember now that Sir Paul Chadwick visited us on the evening when Bernard came to us in his perplexity and asked us to receive Miss Tollemache. He must have misunderstood what he saw."

“No doubt. The great thing is”—Kilrush was not over-anxious to conceal his feelings, and Cecilia’s father seemed to look kindly on him—“the great thing is that it is not true. My accident played me a shabby trick. I was on my way to her, to you, when it happened. It is nearly four weeks ago. For four weeks I have been suffering. I was not convinced that the story was true, else I do not know how I should have borne it.”

He looked with a shy appeal in his smile at Dr. Grace.

“I have a very good character,” he said, “and am sound in wind and limb. And I can provide for a wife. I have your good wishes, sir?”

A cold wind eddying round a street corner blew dead leaves and dust in at the carriage-window; and a sudden chill fell on Kilrush’s exuberant happiness.

“You have my good wishes,” Dr. Grace said, looking at him again with that air of kindly pity which made the lover’s heart cold. “I only hope you will be able to persuade her to listen to you. But she is very obstinate. I have told her she must wait, but she says she will not change. Cecilia wishes to become a nun.”

“A nun!”

Kilrush repeated the words in blankest consternation. The convent—why that would be

the most impregnable barrier of all! His heart sank like a stone as he thought *how* impregnable. No one knew better than he the terrible hopelessness of it.

“She has consented to wait,” Maurice Grace went on in his soft, pitying voice, which had brought comfort to many a bedside. “She is wonderfully sweet and docile, and always has been. Our only daughter; it is not likely that we should be willing to give her; but if it was to be that the sacrifice was asked at our hands,

• • .”

He paused for a second or two and went on.

“You shall see her and plead your own cause with her, Lord Kilrush. There is this in your favor. Her mother and I have noticed that she has been sad for some time, since she came back two months ago from visiting her relatives at the House of Dromore. She says that she has always had it in her mind to become a nun. I doubt it, though I am sure she believes it. Anyhow, something happened to make the very indefinite intention definite. She is making her trousseau now, although she has consented to wait. Such a trousseau, the coarsest and hardest materials that can be found. My poor Cecilia!”

A sharp spasm passed over Kilrush’s face.

“Never mind, my lad, never mind,” the father said compassionately. “I should not

have told you that. Indeed, I did not mean to hurt you. Perhaps—if it was some unhappiness—Cecilia will listen to you. If it was another girl . . .”

He had it in his mind that few girls could resist Kilrush, but he did not go on with the speech. There were not many girls like Cecilia.

“They should not take an only daughter,” Kilrush said, speaking with a curious thickness, while a fire burned in his eyes. “They have no right to take an only daughter.”

“So Mother Margaret holds. Mother Margaret is the nun who has been the object of Cecilia’s devotion for years. You must not blame Cecilia, however. She thinks that her mother and I suffice for each other, which is to some extent true. And . . . if the child were in a convent we should know she was safe and happy. She is not fitted to swing between two worlds. Ah, here we are. Will you wait for me?”

The carriage had turned in at a gate between two hedges still of extraordinary luxuriance although the day was November. Beyond a stretch of green lawn, enclosed by white palings, a little one-storied cottage with green shutters housed the doctor’s patient.

“Where is she?”

“I left her at Dalkey this morning. The

season has been so mild that we have not yet come in for the winter. Very often she comes to town and goes to the convent to be with Mother Margaret. She may be there now. If so, she would probably return home some time in the afternoon."

The carriage stopped in front of the little green-trellised porch. At the same moment a light as of illumination came to the doctor's face.

"Go and see Mother Margaret," he said. "She is the wisest woman I know, inside or outside a convent. Take your case to her, my friend. She will listen to you; and if Cecilia's is a fancied and not a real vocation, she will help you. Stay—I shall be here some time. I will tell my man to drive you across to the convent and return here for me. And"—he let his face relax into lines of sadness—"if Cecilia listens to you, her mother and I will be glad. It is a sad thing to be growing old without children or children's children."

He stepped out on the gravel sweep in front of the house and shut to the door of the brougham. Then, having given directions to the coachman, he lingered a moment to speak a word or two.

"She is a delicate thing, Lord Kilrush," he said earnestly, "a very delicate and a very precious thing. But I could trust her to your keep-

ing. You have a good face, and I have heard nothing but good of you. If you win Cecilia, you will have my blessing: if not, well . . . if the good God wills to keep her unspotted from the world and untroubled by it His own way, her mother and I will try not to repine."

He turned sharply on his heel as though the agitation of his face would not bear the other man's eyes upon it, and went up the steps to the little green hall-door which stood wide open as though he were a welcome guest.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### THE COUNSELOR

LORD KILRUSH waited for Mother Margaret in a low, brown-paneled room, dim and obscure in the November sunlessness. There was not much in the room for the eye to rest upon. A dim oil-painting of a sacred subject above the mantel-piece, an exquisitely wrought and jeweled ivory crucifix below it, a round mahogany table with a blotter and writing materials upon it, some rigid chairs against the wall. That was about all the room contained.

He looked up at the walls and ceiling, down at the polished floor, round about him, and there was not a stain or speck of dust anywhere. Everything was shining with cleanliness, and a little cold. The polished steel grate with the brass jambs to it did not suggest that it ever had a fire. He shivered at the pure, cold atmosphere, thinking that before long these walls might hold Cecilia from his arms, from life and love.

Outside was the garden, very unlike what he remembered of it in its midsummer glories. A few melancholy chrysanthemums raised their

ragged heads above the débris of dead leaves and broken branches. On the apple trees a few apples yet swung in the wind which every moment brought the leaves down in eddying flight and whirl. A stout lay sister with a broom came along and swept the leaves in heaps, while another, following, raked them into her barrow.

The hush of the convent was broken only by now and again the tinkle of a little bell and the swish of a nun's garments as she hurried along the corridor to the choir or the school, obedient to the signal that had called her.

The silence and strangeness of the place were beginning to get on Kilrush's nerves, none too strong for illness and anxiety, when the door opened and Mother Margaret came in. Her coming was as though some one had set a lamp in the room, a lamp clear-shining which should illumine the corners and drive the shadows packing out of doors.

Mother Margaret had a charming face, the sweet oval of which was revealed by the framing of the dead-white coif about it and the hanging veil of black. Her color was nothing to speak of, and her features were irregular; she had a wide, wise, humorous mouth, and her nose was too thick for beauty. But looking in her face one forgot that she was not positively beautiful for the splendor of her eyes. They

were large, they were deep, they were limpid, they were of an odd, light brown that had a touch of golden fire in it. The texture of her skin was of a transparent purity. Her teeth when she smiled were white and even. She had a caressing, soft, coaxing voice and a persuasive manner. In presence of Mother Margaret one felt that here was one of those women of genius, of whom every convent at least seems to possess one, who are wiser in their generation than the children of this world.

She came towards Kilrush, narrowing her eyes a little in the effort to see him. As a matter of fact, the glorious eyes were extremely short-sighted.

“You wished to see me, sir,” she began. And then—“Why, it is Lord Kilrush! You were here on our great occasion last summer, were you not? But you are not looking well. Now, what have you been doing to yourself?”

The kindness of the voice seemed a delightful thing to Kilrush. He almost forgot that his head was swimming and his mind on the rack.

“Dr. Grace sent me to you,” he began.

“To be sure,” she said, encouraging him to go on. “And what about, my child?”

It was a delightful thing to be called Mother Margaret’s child, and Kilrush felt that he would have no difficulty in confiding in her.

“It is about Miss Grace,—about Cecilia. Her father tells me that she wishes to become a nun. Somehow, I think, I hope, that it is not a real vocation. If it were so, I should only have to submit, even though it made me the most miserable man alive.”

“Ah!” Mother Margaret nodded. “Even though it made you the most miserable man alive.”

“I love her,” he said simply. “And—up to a certain point I could have sworn she loved me. Then she repulsed me; she sent me from her. She would give me no explanation. I waited, thinking she only needed time. Then”—he passed over the intervening trouble which had been shown to be needless—“I hear she is bent on the conventional life.”

“Yes—and not with us. Do you know that? She wants to go to the Poor Clares. She is very devoted to me, as I am to her. Our friendship would be always a consolation in any circumstances. But she chooses the Poor Clares. It is the latest idea. It is a young girl’s way to be *entêtée* from self-sacrifice.”

“Cecilia among the Poor Clares! Under that rigid rule! Impossible! Why, she would not live a year.”

“Many more delicate than she have lived to be ninety under that rigid rule. My dear Lord Kilrush, I have the deepest sympathy for

you. But, of course, if I believed the child to have a genuine vocation I could only be sorry for you."

He grasped at what was unexpressed in her words.

"But you do *not* believe her to have a vocation?"

"My experience is that every girl of imagination who is brought in contact at all with the religious life, believes she has a vocation at one time or another. It is a great misfortune for a convent when one who has not a genuine vocation slips through to her final vows. It makes at the best for trouble; at the worst, it makes for the escaped nun. We have to be on our guard."

"And . . . ?"

He hung on her words.

"I confess that I disbelieve in Cecilia's vocation. She has a beautiful voice. Some of the younger, more zealous, less discreet nuns, urged upon her that it was her duty to give up her voice to God. But she can do that in the world. A gift is always a mission, though the world will not see it so. She is an only child. I think that was the duty God gave her, and she listened to me when I said so, and I think was relieved. St. Jane Frances de Chantal walked to her convent over the bodies of her children. To be sure they were grown-up children, but

even then—if they needed her! Who am I to judge a saint?" She laughed, showing her white, even teeth. "Cecilia went away happily with her mind at rest to stay with her cousins. She came back unhappy and with the vocation very insistent. I have discovered one bee that she has in her bonnet. Her father should set it at rest. She thinks that her mother's mental trouble might recur in her; that for that reason she ought not to marry. I understand there is no hereditary taint whatever in Mrs. Grace."

"None," said the young man eagerly. "It was a shock, a fearful shock. She heard suddenly that her lover had been killed and eaten by cannibals. It was enough to unhinge any delicate and sensitive mind."

"I agree with you, and I do not think it is in the least likely to recur. Mrs. Grace, poor lamb! is quite herself now. The years seem to have forgotten her. No one dare think of her as middle-aged. Cecilia's father must talk to her about this fear she has. Some one must have put it into her head."

"It was enough to account for her dismissing me."

"Yes, I think it was enough, with a girl of Cecilia's delicate conscience. If there is anything else—well, you had better ask Cecilia. I have an idea the Poor Clares may lose a postu-

lant. Mother de Pazzi would never forgive me, if she knew."

"You advise me to go to Cecilia?"

"She is coming to me about three o'clock. Better wait here lest you should miss her on the way. I don't suppose Mount St. Mary's ever before was made a trysting-place for lovers."

Her bright eyes danced at him.

"How good you are to me, Mother Margaret!" he said impulsively. "What an angel!"

"Oh, not an angel, my child. Only a poor nun who stayed in the world till her fortieth year, and has brought some of the common-sense of the world into the cloister."

Her voice changed to one kind and common-sensible. She took a silver watch from her leatheren girdle and looked at the face.

"You have an hour and a half to wait," she said, "and I must see about some lunch for you. It is a fast day, and I fear there isn't a bit of meat in the convent; but we will do what we can for you. And the first thing I had better do is to take you to a room with a fire. You ought not to have been here so long."

She opened a door in the corner of the room and preceded him into another room where a bright fire burned. The room was walled with books.

"This is our Children of Mary's library," she

said. "You must find a book to amuse you. There are plenty of harmless novels. Have you read this new book of Mrs. Steel's? I haven't read it myself, but I can recommend it."

With a motherly kindness she pushed an armchair in front of the fire for Kilmurry.

"Now, I must leave you," she said; "my bell rang a few minutes ago. A nun ought always to answer her bell promptly. I will see that your lunch is sent in. And I will let you know when Cecilia arrives. Poor Cecilia! she little knows how we are plotting against her vocation."

She went away, smiling back at him over her shoulder. And presently a little brown-faced lay sister came in and laid the cloth, and between two or three errands set out on it a dish of eggs, delicious French rolls and creamy butter, a coffee-pot, a little tray containing a cup and saucer, cream and sugar, and hot milk, with a tall Empire dish of golden pears and plums.

"Mother Margaret said you were to eat all and ring for more," she said, surveying the dainty meal with a beaming countenance. "Mother Margaret was quite right. The young ought to eat. When you are ready, if you touch the bell I will bring you more."

She looked at Kilmurry as though he were sixteen.

"Ah, yes, the young ought to eat," she repeated. "You do not look as though you had been eating. It is wrong not to take care of the health God gives you. Very, very wrong. If I had charge of you, how I should scold you!"

Kilrush ate the first meal he had enjoyed for many weeks, despite the fact that excitement and fear of the approaching interview made him feel as though his heart trembled and shook his body. His achievements did not please the little lay sister, who would have him eat a meal fit only for giants; but he had been feeling faint, and the good, delicately prepared food revived him.

He was apparently scanning the backs of the books in the book-shelves, but not seeing a single one of the titles, when Mother Margaret returned to him.

"Ah," she said. "I thought that even Mrs. Steel would fail. I have told them to send Cecilia in here when she arrives. I want her to see you without being prepared for the sight of you, and I want to see her see you."

"I have been thinking what I could give the convent," he said. "What does it want—an altar, a stained window?"

"Cecilia would be well worth a thanksgiving," Mother Margaret said smiling. "You and she together shall do as you will. But re-

member—if there had been a vocation, I should have been as hard as the nether millstone. Sister Stephanie is disturbed about you. She says you ought to be kept in bed and fed up. She is sure you oughtn’t to be out in the night air.”

“I have been fed up to-day,” he said. “Although I confess, Mother Margaret, I hardly knew what I was eating. The suspense has been awful.”

“Ah!” said Mother Margaret, with her delightful smile, “I have two sisters married. I used to know all about their agitations and hopes and fears. We religious are spared a great deal. There is the front-door bell. Cecilia is punctual.”

A second or two later the door opened and Cecilia came into the room.

## CHAPTER XXV AND LAST

“LOVE THAT HATH US IN HIS NET”

FOR a second she did not perceive Kilrush, who had drawn himself back into the shadow by the fireplace. When at last she saw him a great wave of color flooded her innocent face. The pitiless north light of the window was upon it. One could not but feel that her whole delicate body blushed. Her eyelids fluttered and fell. For a second she was a picture of confusion; then the color began to ebb away, before Mother Margaret, with a motion as though she would shelter the girl, pushed her gently into a chair.

“Lord Kilrush wishes to talk to you, Cecilia,” she said. “He has your father’s sanction; and I want you to listen to him and think over what he has to say.”

“Oh, no, no!” said Cecilia so softly that those who listened had a sense that they had only imagined she spoke; yet there was a wild appeal in the softness. She put out her hand with a childish action to capture Mother Margaret’s floating veil, as though she would detain her by force if needs be. “There is nothing

Lord Kilrush can have to say to me which you may not stay to hear."

"Be kind to him, Cecilia; he has been very ill."

The girl lifted her shrinking eyes, and something of a maternal compassion filled them.

"Ah," she said in a whisper, "I had not heard. I am so sorry that you were ill."

"I met with an accident," Kilrush answered. "I was on my way to Dublin at the time to see you. I was in headlong haste to catch my train, or it need not have happened. It has kept me back nearly a month from seeing you."

"Ah!" Cecilia said again. "You wanted to see me. Why?"

"Because an extraordinary rumor had reached us." Mother Margaret went out softly at this point and closed the door towards which Cecilia barely glanced; she was listening so intently now to what Kilrush had to say. "An extraordinary rumor. I ought not to have believed it. If I had cared less, my dear, I should have known that it could not be true. But Sir Paul Chadwick was very certain, and your own letter to Lady Dromore seemed to bear it out."

"What letter? What rumor?" Cecilia asked with wide, startled eyes. "What was it you heard about me?"

"That you were going to marry your cousin

—the cousin I saw with you at the train the day we traveled together to the House of Dromore.”

“I! Marry Bernard Grace!”

The wounded blood rushed to Cecilia’s face. Her soft lip curled.

“That was something you ought *not* to have believed—on any evidence,” she said coldly.

“I am very sorry,” he answered humbly. “God knows it tortured me. I have been in torture, Cecilia, while I thought the story might be true.”

“Oh! oh!” said Cecilia, covering her face with her hands, “you should not say such things. Don’t you know? Hasn’t papa told you? Hasn’t Mother Margaret told you?”

He drew her hands down from her face.

“Your father and Mother Margaret have both given me their blessing,” he said. “What is it that has come between us, Cecilia? Not this—this vocation, in which neither your father nor Mother Margaret believe. Your vocation is to take care of me, Cecilia. If you refuse, heaven knows what may happen to me. I think I could be pretty bad if I was shut away from you by the convent walls or any other barrier. When a man loves a woman as I love you the woman is responsible for his soul.”

She looked at him with eyes dilated.

"You don't mean to say that you would be—not good—if I told you I must enter the convent," she said.

"I think certainly that I might be—not good," he replied, and hardly knew whether he was playing with her tender fears or not.

"Oh, but there would be some one else to console you," she said desperately. "Why not—Betty? Betty is so sweet. If I had never come"—she floundered, and looked from side to side as though she meditated flight—"if I had never come . . . they were so kind to me. I'm not saying that Betty was . . . ready . . . to love you . . . but if you had loved her. . . . Betty is not the one to hold out against you. I know she likes you very much."

"So she does; but not so well as she likes Chadwick."

*"What?"*

"Not so well as she likes Chadwick. Chadwick and she have always been in love with each other. I always knew it—at least for a long time. I forget you don't know our news. Chadwick saved Betty from drowning a few weeks ago at Kilkee. She had been caught under the cliffs by a high tide. Chadwick pulled her up out of the reach of the sea. They were imprisoned in a hole in the cliffs till the

turn of the tide, for it was impossible to reach them from above. During the imprisonment Chadwick spoke. Perhaps he never would have, only for that. He is in a state of beatification because Betty stoops to him, and Betty is blessing her stars for that hour on the cliff. They tried to keep their rapture out of my sight because they pitied me; but it was impossible to hide it. Lady Dromore is delighted. Betty is like a golden rose. Arlo is in the hands of painters and decorators. And Betty talks of her trousseau.”

“Oh!” said Cecilia. “Oh! I never thought of such a thing. I thought it was you that Betty loved.”

Kilrush had a sudden revelation.

“And that was why you were suddenly cold to me, Cecilia? Cecilia, loyalist! That was why you sent me away. That was why you thought of the convent.”

“Not altogether,” said Cecilia, with frightened but happy eyes in his embrace. “There is another reason why I ought not to marry.”

“You think there is,” Kilrush said. “There is not. Mother Margaret has told me. Ask your father about it. He will tell you there is nothing to fear. Who was it put such a fear into your poor, little head? My sweetheart, there is no taint in you. You are unspotted

from head to foot—your lovely mind as well as your lovely body. No bride ever came to her groom more perfect than you."

So, Cecilia's vocation disappeared, and the wisdom of Mother Margaret was justified. The Poor Clares were disappointed in Cecilia, and pitied her because she had chosen the lower instead of the higher state of life; but as Mother Margaret said cheerfully: "It takes all sorts to make a world; and without marriages there would soon be an end to convents."

Gran also disapproved. She refused to be dazzled at having a lord for a grandson-in-law, and yielded Cecilia hardly and with some bitterness to the Dromores and her mother's class.

But Time, that modifies everything, in time modified Gran's feelings about the marriage when she found that Lady Kilrush remained just the same unspoiled, affectionate, humble child that Cecilia Grace had been. And also when Ciss and her husband went back to the Dromores, and Maurice Grace and Lord Dromore became fast friends, being kindred spirits indeed in their serious unworldliness.

"Lady Kilrush" became a social asset to the Patrick Graces, her name being always on the lips of Mrs. Patrick Grace and her daughters, her ways and tastes and opinions constantly quoted to the social circle in which they moved, in which Mrs. Patrick and her daughters were

visibly exalted by their relationship to the peerage.

Mrs. Patrick for long kept up a hostile attitude to her son's wife, being of opinion that Irene had very cleverly and cunningly foisted herself and her old, blind father on to Bernard, an opinion she was not slow about expressing. However, it mattered little to young Mrs. Grace, who was perfectly happy in her strange choice, and lived far enough away to see very little of her husband's family.

But Mrs. Patrick also shows signs of reconsidering her attitude. With Irene an honored guest among the great, accepted even at the House of Dromore, her mother-in-law cannot long afford to be hostile towards her.

Bernard, under his wife's gentle influence and tutelage has so far modified himself that his mother secretly thinks him terribly changed for the worse. "You'd think he was nobody, just nobody," she says, "that used to swagger round with his dogs and horses the equal of any man. His father and me hardly know him."

Bernard is a prominent Nationalist, and nearly at the point of attaining his ambition to represent an Irish constituency. Wherefore he is of interest to the Dromores and their friends who are on the popular side, and very, very seldom indeed has Irene to rebuke him

for a solecism, or Lady Dromore to explain him to friends more intolerant than herself.

Already Maurice Grace talks of the time when he will give up practice and settle down somewhere near Cecilia and her husband. It seems absurd of him to talk of being out of the fight, with Ciss by his side looking radiant in a sort of immortal youth. One man wishes for the time to be, and that is Dr. Brady, who is settled down near his friends, Lord and Lady Kilrush, and never seems to desire to leave his and their precincts. When Maurice Grace comes, there is a great intellectual brightening-up for him. The two doctors discuss the things that most interest them—the newest discovery in science or medicine, the latest great feat in surgery, the things that are being done and are being hoped for to alleviate the sufferings of humanity.

But though he talks of retiring, Maurice Grace knows that he never will retire nor fix his habitation where he desires while Gran lives. Gran has hitherto refused all invitations to Kilrush Manor, although she has accepted the noble grandson-in-law. Even the heir over whom her eyes filled when he was laid in her lap will not tempt Gran to quit the sphere to which she was born for more aristocratic circles. So Cecilia and the heir have to come to her.

Cecilia in her lovely matronhood looks less

than ever the daughter of Ciss. But to be sure Ciss dropped so many years out of her life, and, waking, took up her life where she had laid it down. Ciss will look a goddess for many a year yet, although she is a grandmother. She is adored by the Dromores, old and young, by their dependants and the poor, by Betty at Arlo and Cecilia at Kilrush Manor. The wise, patient, hard-working husband looks at Ciss, and there is a felicity in his eyes more than in the eyes of the younger lovers. For he knows that to him the goddess is pure woman.



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